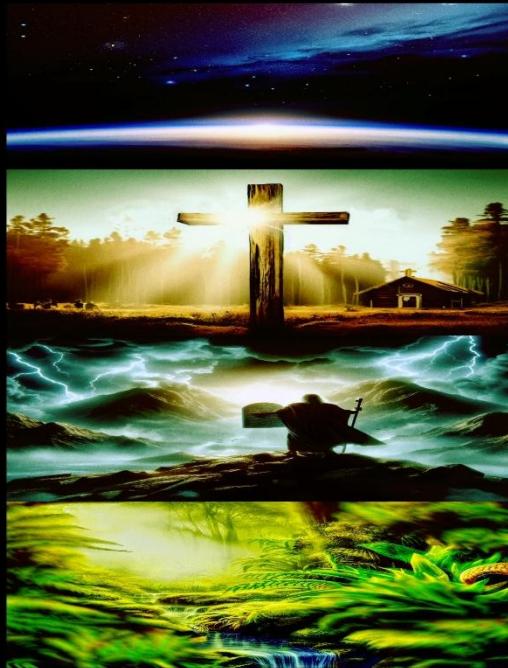


# Salvation Now and Life Beyond

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Steve H Hakes

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Revisiting The Pilgrim's Progress

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Salvation Now and Life Beyond

# **Salvation Now and Life Beyond**

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**Steve H Hakes**

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Thanks especially to...

- the Salvation Army, for getting Christ into me, and for what in those days was called the Christian Revival Crusade (Australia), for getting me into Christ.
- C S Lewis, whose works helped ground me in Christianity.
- Anne my spouse, for her support in life.

True life is a life of gratitude.

Dedicated to the memory of

Dr. David Allen

my former tutor at Mattersey Hall  
in church history and doctrines

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### Biblical abbreviations

Ac. <i>Acts</i>	Is. <i>Isaiah</i>	Nb. <i>Numbers</i>
Am. <i>Amos</i>	Jas. <i>James</i>	Neh. <i>Nehemiah</i>
Chr. <i>Chronicles</i>	Jg. <i>Judges</i>	Ob. <i>Obadiah</i>
Col. <i>Colossians</i>	Jhn. <i>John</i>	Phm. <i>Philemon</i>
Cor. <i>Corinthians</i>	Jl. <i>Joel</i>	Php. <i>Philippians</i>
Dan. <i>Daniel</i>	Jnh. <i>Jonah</i>	Pr. <i>Proverbs</i>
Dt. <i>Deuteronomy</i>	Job. <i>Job</i>	Ps(s). <i>Psalm(s)</i>
Ec. <i>Ecclesiastes</i>	Jos. <i>Joshua</i>	Pt. <i>Peter</i>
Eph. <i>Ephesians</i>	Jr. <i>Jeremiah</i>	Rm. <i>Romans</i>
Est. <i>Esther</i>	Jude. <i>Jude</i>	Ruth. <i>Ruth</i>
Ex. <i>Exodus</i>	Kg. <i>Kings</i>	Rv. <i>Revelation</i>
Ezk. <i>Ezekiel</i>	Lk. <i>Luke</i>	Sam. <i>Samuel</i>
Ezr. <i>Ezra</i>	Lm. <i>Lamentations</i>	Sg. <i>Song of Songs</i>
Gal. <i>Galatians</i>	Lv. <i>Leviticus</i>	Ths. <i>Thessalonians</i>
Gen. <i>Genesis</i>	Mic. <i>Micah</i>	Tm. <i>Timothy</i>
Hab. <i>Habakkuk</i>	Mk. <i>Mark</i>	Tts. <i>Titus</i>
Heb. <i>Hebrews</i>	Ml. <i>Malachi</i>	Zc. <i>Zechariah</i>
Hg. <i>Haggai</i>	Mt. <i>Matthew</i>	Zp. <i>Zephaniah</i>
Hos. <i>Hosea</i>	Nah. <i>Nahum</i>	

### Grades<sup>1</sup>

Percent	100-95	94-90	89-85	84-80	79-75	74-70	69-65	
Letter	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	
Point	4.3	4	3.7	3.3	3	2.7	2.3	
Percent	64-60	59-55	54-50	49-45	44-40	39-27	26-14	13-00
Letter	C	C-	D+	D	D-	U+	U	U-
Point	2	1.7	1.3	1	0.7	0	0	0

<sup>1</sup> For handier sorting in tables, I advise using A1/A2/A3 and B1/B2/B3, etc, for grade letters. I have put these here in the more familiar forms of, eg, A+/A/- and B+/B/B-. For grade points, I round final totals to the nearest 0.5 points.

## Preface

This is a simplified and reduced rewrite of my more academic, *Israel's Gone Global: Exploring Biblical Salvation*. Academic books have a greater obligation to engage with competing ideas on the market, and to argue *to* positions, rather than arguing *from* positions. That can lead to hiding the tree of the author within a forest of trees from other authors. Some prefer to walk through the wood, which gives better context and broader considerations. Others prefer an uncluttered view of the tree. I declutter.

What is salvation? I offer a book sized answer to this even bigger question. I've been a mere Christian for over 60 years, and over the years I have become convinced that both my narrower evangelical glasses (readers) and wider ecumenical glasses (distance), have been myopic. I have gradually ground my own lenses. It's good to see reality.

Once upon a time, a certain man couldn't tell if he was thinking of a dream, or dreaming of a thought: was he a butterfly dreaming he was a man, or a man who had dreamed he was a butterfly? *Inception*, and *The Matrix*, play with this idea. But "the waking world is judged more real because it can... contain the dreaming world: the dreaming world is judged less real because it cannot contain the waking one. For the same reason, I am certain that in passing from the scientific point of view to the theological, I have passed from dream to waking. Christian theology can fit in science, art, morality, and the sub-Christian religions. The scientific point of view cannot fit in any of these things, not even science itself. I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else" (C S Lewis). Let us wake up to salvation now and life beyond. Here I wish to share my wakefulness, a viewpoint which I think explains the most.

For Bible quotes I often amend [the LORD] to [Yahweh],<sup>2</sup> and remove false capitals from nouns and pronouns. I generally take liberties when quoting, in updating gender style, adjusting tenses, standardising abbreviations, and simplifying bibliographies intext. The end of this book lists quoted books.

Steve H Hakes (2024) [mallon.detc@gmail.com](mailto:mallon.detc@gmail.com)

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<sup>2</sup> Pleasantly surprising, Andrew Wilson's *Incomparable* (2021), subpar in some ways, nevertheless features this plus point. I am not alone.

## Chapter 1      Israel 1: Jacob-Israel

### The Old Road Begun

Israel 1      Jacob-Israel—Jacob the man

“...Your name won’t be Jacob any longer, but Israel...” (CEB: Gen.32:28).

I have long believed that the term *Israel* (*yisrā’ēl*) is a useful handle for understanding the doctrine of salvation by God. It’s not an elastic term, as if we can stretch it to mean whatever we wish it to mean. It is however multifunctional. Indeed, many words have a range of function. I wish to look into four levels of meaning in the term, *Israel*, beginning with its use for a man named Jacob.

By certain twists and turns, Jacob had inherited a covenant given by God—or to give him what most scholars allow to be God’s personal name, by Yahweh. This covenant was limited to the firstborn male heirs of Abraham. This word *covenant* needs time to understand, but for now let’s say that Abraham had been given a special relationship with Yahweh—a light and a love to live by. It didn’t make life easy, but it made life meaningful.

Abraham was the pathway to the road named Jacob, and in his turn, Abraham’s inheritor-son, Isaac, had inherited that special commitment. And under Jacob who was Isaac’s inheritor-son, that covenant extended to all of Jacob’s twelve sons born through two primary, and two secondary, wives. Polygamy was not an issue in their culture. Before that, I wonder whether Jacob wondered whether the unusual covenant had some wider fulfilment. And when it was extended to all of his sons, and through them to their descendants, was there yet to be some wider fulfilment, breaching the bounds of ethnicity—a new covenant; a global covenant?

But for now let’s stay with Jacob. Socially flawed but spiritually on the ball, he had fought his way into a deeper relationship with God. He had cheated his way to the top, but I wonder whether he had reasoned to himself that his brother Esau, maybe the nicer guy, simply wasn’t worthy of the honour of spiritual inheritance. If so he would have been right. He had his fights with Esau. He

also fought with God, before being told that his self-identity would no longer be Jacob, a name linked to deception.

That big fight with God helped him resolve some inner conflict, while crippling his self-sufficiency (compare 2 Cor.12:9). He won the new name, Israel, a word connected to the idea that he had wrestled with God and with people (Gen.32:28). His new name was his new designation, but he was still often called simply Jacob, perhaps because he often fell back into his previous nature. But he who had fought against God, would fight alongside God.

The accounts of that epic fight, so significant in world history, can leave us wondering whether Jacob battled it out directly with Yahweh, or whether indirectly by a *messenger* of Yahweh (*mal'āk Yahweh*) whether an angel of heaven or a man of earth.

A similar question is raised by Gospel accounts of Christ's tomb, and looking at the latter can help us understand the former. In the latter, Matthew spoke of one *angel/messenger* (*angelos*); Mark spoke of one *young man* (*neaniskos*) at the tomb; Luke spoke of two radiant *men* (*andres*)—offhandedly implying that they weren't mere mortals; John spoke of two angels (*angeloi*). Ac.10 shows an angel (3-4), dressed up as a man (*anēr*): 30. It's sometimes a question of editorial perspective for details and focus.

The Gospel writers coordinated their data to messiah's resurrection and beyond. Matthew focused on the majestic nature of the one who spoke, so indicated one heavenly angel. Mark focused on the message, not the messenger, and to the women an angel had looked just like a young man—they were to learn to look beyond. We too. Luke hinted to his Gentile audience that divine messengers had been at work. Ancient histories were not always written in literalism. There was perspective, not error. George Ladd's *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (1975:91-3), harmonises.

Going back to Jacob's fight, it looked as if an evenly matched man had picked a fight with him in the dead of night. Perhaps wondering how easily Jacob would give up, he deliberately tested his persistency—Job could tell us a thing or two about this! Jacob was tested and stretched to his limits physically, even as he would

be spiritually. Through great pain he had to hold on to God, so to speak, and years later he confessed to Egypt's pharaoh that life had been difficult (Gen.47:9). But Jacob-Israel's pain was our gain.

As to Jacob's opponent, he showed an uncanny ability to bless (Heb.7:7), and one or two other powers besides. So it seems that he was more than human. Was he less than God? Now if Gen.32:28 shows that Jacob's opponent was God, does it equally show that Jacob's opponent was in fact opponents, *men*? And that does not compute. If this text is about only one encounter, the Aristotelian mind is mystified.

However, it included Jacob's earlier spiritual searching, as Jacob struggled through deific and human barriers. He hadn't found his place either with God or with human society, but had struggled to the door that God had planned for him. Jacob was left with a reminder to look back on—specifically a limp. And it might have encouraged him to witness to all who asked him how he got that limp. At its most basic, Jacob had become Jacob-Israel, a link in salvation's plan.

The message of that night counts, and retains its inner core. Through the struggles of that night, Jacob was given a spiritually symbolic name for one who had struggled with God (Hos.12:3-5) and had gained. Jacob's complex life had meaning, and he would significantly shape our future. But we really do not need to picture deity as having appeared as a man to *literally* fight Jacob, like the Hulk becoming a flea to ferociously fight a flimsy flea.

Nor indeed would even an angel of light, able to wipe out a human army at the blink of an eye, go all out to defeat Jacob, fail, and then cower terrified at the thought of being revealed in the light of day. If a divine appearance (theophany), the angel didn't fight his best. Oh and by the way, biblically angels are always masculine (not male), though in nativity plays often change gender to the feminine (even female). If feminine angels exist, as I suspect, perhaps they have no direct part to play in mortal history.

As to outcome, Jacob's people would be initially called the Children of Israel—I like the consistent wording of the NKJV here.

Yet it seems to me that the Jacob theme weakened as the years rolled on, and perhaps forgetting their roots in favour of their developing identity, that Israel's children adopted his name in their own right, having adopted the struggle.

As to the vision, he and the angel had just acted out Jacob's life to that date. Jacob hadn't assumed his opponent to be God, and had even asked for his name (Gen.32:29). That he named that place God's Face (*Peniel*) speaks not of the direct identity of the opponent, I think, but of a level of revelation from God.

It definitely does not mean, is that God has a literal face, bearded or otherwise. Some begin with the idea that man is created in God's likeness—that bit is spiritually true enough—then add on Scripture's man/animal (anthropomorphic/zoomorphic) language of God having hands (Ex.7:5); eyes (Dt.11:12); at least one ear (2 Kg.19:16); a heart (2 Chr.7:16); arms (Ps.89:10); feathers (Ps.91:4); and feet (Is.66:1), saying, "The Bible says", as if a gotcha moment.

When asked whether God had eyes and feet, Billy Graham was blunt: "No, God doesn't have hands or eyes or feet".<sup>3</sup> Billy, often raising his Bible and humbly proclaiming, "The Bible says", could dig deeper, seeing what the Bible *meant* within its envelope of common speech: its message is what it says. Sometimes It's just that there's a lot of poetical language in the Bible, and God was pictured in ways familiar to us, since we needed some pictures to identify with. But in plain speech, God is not a man (Hos.11:9).

Generations after Peniel, Moses said to Yahweh, "If I have truly pleased you, show me your plans so that I may know you and continue to please you" (NCV: Ex.33:13). Moses even mentioned the Earth's face (*pānay*: 16). After that, Yahweh affirmed his pleasure in working with Moses, showing him a shadow of his plans, a vague outline. The exodus wasn't a time for any to see God's face (*pānay*: 20), but Yah did affirm his covenant name, thereby affirming his

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<sup>3</sup> <https://billygraham.org/answers/does-god-have-hands-eyes-and-feet-like-we-do-what-does-the-bible-mean-when-it-says-we-were-created-in-his-image>

covenant with Ethnic-Israel, but he indicated that much of his plan, his glory, remained hidden. He had had mercy in selecting Ethnic-Israel for an ethnic covenant, and instigating an exodus.

But a bit like, “What is that to you? You follow me” (Jhn.21:22), would the future reveal a wider plan of mercy beyond ethnic borders, something which God wasn’t letting Moses into (Ex.33:20)? Was hiding his face in so many words hiding his plans—“It’s classified. If I tell you I’ll have to kill you”? Moses only saw and understood in part. God’s there and then glory was limited to Ethnic-Israel (23).

Only in the face of his son would his secret plan, his full face, be revealed. We who are Christians behold God’s Face, his global plan transcending the ethnic. The once hidden secret is that ethnic-Gentiles have become fellow heirs of the same community, sharers of God’s promise in Christ through the gospel (Eph.3:4,6). All messianic believers have come through the gospel which transcends the former ethnic divide. Paul did not mean willy-nilly *every* single person of Ethnic-Israel being joined in messiah by *every* single person of all other peoples. I’ll cover this later.

But Jacob had looked into God’s eyes, and perhaps saw that his covenant descendants would become a phase-two of God’s Israel-road. They may be called Israel 2. Israel 1 (Jacob) saw his people begin an era of blessing so amazing that some nowadays look back in disgust and say that God’s particular love for Ethnic-Israel was scandalous, biased. Yet this *scandal of particularism*, which went back to Abraham, prepared God’s dream for *global* blessing. Unlike us, God has no unjust bias, no unfair favouritism.

## Chapter 2      Israel 2: Ethnic-Israel

### Covenant and Israel

Israel 1    Jacob-Israel—Jacob the man

Israel 2    Ethnic-Israel—Jacob's twelve sons and descendants

“...Yahweh will distinguish Israel's livestock from Egypt's livestock...”  
(CEB: Ex.9:4).

A quick question. What's your first thought if I just say, Israel? Is it, scallywag? Is it a morally mixed-bag of ethnic people who were given a covenant? Is it a saviour? Is it the morally mixed-bag of church? Or putting politics first, is it a political State? If the second, could an ethnic people once have had a covenant which is no longer valid, even as some might once have had a marriage which is no longer valid? Some speak of covenants as everlasting, so I'll look at the covenant of marriage—till death do us part?

But before getting on to this, let's think just a little about Ethnic-Israel, which had was descended from Abraham, and was given a national ethnic covenant at Sinai. Certainly Ethnic-Israel was given a covenant with God, with Yahweh, and certainly the church has a transethnic covenant with God in Christ which is global. Some indeed say that the church's many titles includes Israel. Has Israel's gone global? But the church seldom voices that title, and if hearing that name Joe Public probably thinks of the State of Israel and ethnic-Jews, remnants of Ethnic-Israelites.

Another quick question. Do you love or loathe the term, Zionism? Politically do you fly the flag, burn the flag, or respect it simply as a national flag? As a Christian, messianism is my big flag. There is a political Zionism which relates to an ethnic people, and there is a spiritual Zionism which relates to God's transethnic people. Again, the latter seldom claims to be Zion, in the sense of God's city, but that is what it is. We may call the first meaning, ethno-Zionism, and the latter, spirito-Zionism. Another term is Christian Zionism, although that fails to understand the two types of Zionism. To be a Christian is to be a Zionist, for Christianity is Zionism, the new people of God, a theme which needs teaching.

I grew up within the fringes of a subsection of dispensationalism called British Israelism, a fringe of the Pentecostal market. If I recall my small corner aright, it held that the tribes of Jacob-Israel having split, the bigger section—the north kingdom—which held the title Israel, became lost but resurfaced with British identity and is open to the gospel, but the smaller section of the south kingdom—now ethnic-Jews—has a different salvation route in God’s will, and so is generally off-limits to the gospel.

But British Israelism is generally in line with classical dispensationalism, in which the [ethnic] Jewish road leads to earthly blessing with an option of heaven, but the church road leads directly to heaven. It falls short of a gene-code lottery in which only if born to the right ethnicities will you ever be invited to make heaven your home. But it held that some end-age ethno-Jews might qualify under Rm.11:26 for higher-end salvation.

But biblically the term, salvation, is a pretty wide idea, and covers a lot of salvation-on-earth ideas, what some call the steaks on the plate while we wait. This covers physical and mental healing, prevention of physical death, deliverance from enemies, and release from sin’s domain (Bromiley 1132). If we understand how the Bible handles this term, I think we neither need to grasp British Israelism, nor even some idea of an end-age revival of all [ethnic] Israel as if a late apology by God for choosing the Jews.

As to the spiritual range of salvation, Jesus spoke of what to emphasise its spiritual quality I call *eternal life* pre-death (Jhn.17:3). He also spoke of what to emphasise its spiritual unendingness I call *everlasting life* post-death. The same Greek word *aiōnios*, carries both shades of meaning. I used to wonder why the KJV translators toggled *eternal life* with *everlasting life* (eg Mt.19:16 vs Mt.19:29; Mk.10:30 vs Lk.18:30). Then I twigged that they simply weren’t too fussed. Both synonyms are true, true. But sometimes one synonym speaks truer than the other. Salvation is now.

When speaking of salvation, I hold that by global aim and grace, Ethnic-Israel had a salvation on earth, offering them light and love in the then and there, but not guaranteeing salvation beyond

earth. Theirs was never a road into heaven beyond, but was a community road of heaven-on-earth, a knowing of Yahweh which is reflected in their higher psalms. Many Israelites of course were never more than nominal Senaites, living the life but not the love, God not especially in their hearts, nor they especially in his.

Some hold Sinai to be valid, and reckon either that all covenants are unconditional and stand at least until messiah returns, or that though some were given as conditional, *Sinai* is unconditional and eternal. I hold Sinai to be invalid, and hold that *eternal* does not always mean *everlasting*—context is king—and that ethno-Zionism has outlived its covenant. But could the covenant with Ethnic-Israel, via Abraham and Moses, have been annulled?

Besides Judaics and some Christians, some others have held Sinai to remain valid. Take for instance Julian the Apostate, neither Christian nor ethno-Zionist. He was a good man who argued that Sinaism was unendable. And to prove his point he cited Jesus to oppose Paul (Mt.5:19 vs Rm.4:11-2). Julian concluded that unlike the upstart Christianity, Judaism should exist alongside pagan religions since blest by antiquity. Was he right about Sinaism? Did Paul begin Christianity? Were Christians the real apostates?

When I came to wonder whether Sinai had been annulled, I mulled over whether eternal unconditional covenants could end. Then I saw that Sinai was like any marriage, a covenant eternal within mortal life. Then I asked, Is that eternal, as in intended *until death does us part* unless *divorce does us part*? That's one reason why I have looked long into the whole question of divorce and remarriage as biblically hidden assumptions for covenant.

But another picture I came to consider was that of a road. I believe both that Ethnic-Israel was on a special road of salvation, and a road to the cross. I believe that God always planned to end the Sinai road when messiah died to begin the true road the other side of the cross, the crossroad which Sinai was headed towards, which I call the Messianic Road. In fact, the two Jewish zealots who died alongside Yeshua typify the choice ethnic-Jews have had to make. At the crossroad would they continue straight on, or take the right

turn in repentance and to assurance (Lk.23:43)? Ethnic-Jews and ethnic-Gentiles on this new road are Spiritual Israelites, metaphorically of Sarah. Ethnic-Jews and ethnic-Gentiles not travelling on this road are Spiritual Gentiles/Goyim, metaphorically of Hagar. And as Douglas Moo noted, in Rm.9:7-8 ethnic Israel could be contrasted to the Christ, as Ishmael to Isaac, Abraham's seed *kata sarka* but not God's true child, not Abraham's child *according to the promise* (Scorgie, Strauss, & Voth 370).

Among ethno-Zionists this assertion sounds hellish enough to cause a weeping and a gnashing of teeth. And if you ain't got teeth, teeth can be provided, as one wag said. For ethno-Zionists stand beneath an imaginary wailing wall as they sincerely pray for the peace of physical Jerusalem. And oh yes, it's worth mentioning that even the term Jerusalem has a range of meanings—context is king. Messiah's victorious death triggered a new level of prophetic fulfilments, and the dawning of a new level of definitions.

That opened up a whole can of fulfilments, what some happily call typology. Typology was well brought out by R T France. "Matthew's view of Jesus as the one who fulfilled the whole fabric of scriptural revelation is most strikingly brought to light in the large number of what may be called *typological* allusions in the OT. These occur both in his records of Jesus' sayings and in his own wording of narratives and his editorial comments. Typology is not peculiar to *Matthew*, and may properly be seen as an essential element of Jesus' own self-understanding. But in *Matthew* it is particularly pronounced.

"Typology...may be defined as the recognition of a correspondence between OT and NT events, based on a conviction of the unchanging character of the principles of God's working, and a consequent understanding and description of the NT event in terms of the OT model—except that *events*, is too narrow, since OT persons and institutions (such as the temple or the covenant) come in for the same treatment.

"Put simply, we are talking here about *fulfilment* not only of OT predictions, but of OT history and religion, including events and institutions which in themselves carried no explicit reference to the future. In commenting on 5:17 we shall note the idea of the law

pointing forward to Jesus, who can therefore be said to *fulfil* it. In chapter 2 we shall see Jesus presented as a ‘new Moses’, among other varied typological themes, and in the same chapter he will be equated with God’s son, Israel (see on 2:15). In 4:1-11 the whole story of the testing of Jesus is undergirded by the recognition of a correspondence between his experience and the testing of God’s son Israel in the wilderness as recorded in *Deuteronomy*.

“Chapter 12 will offer a series of OT *precedents* as justification for Jesus’ assumption of authority over the sabbath (see on 12:3-8), focused on the explicit statement that ‘something greater than the temple is here’ (12:6), followed later in the chapter by the same formula applied to Jonah and Solomon (12:41-2) on the basis of an explicit prediction that Jesus was to undergo a parallel experience to that of Jonah (12:40)....

“These are some of the more striking examples of a conviction which runs throughout [Matthew], that as God worked in the OT times, so he has worked in the ministry of Jesus, and yet with a ‘something greater’ which makes Jesus the *fulfilment* of the whole warp and woof of the OT, not just of the explicit predictions of the prophets. This typology is not so much a hermeneutical technique as a theological conviction which expresses itself in Matthew’s presentation of Jesus’ life and teaching. Its effect is to show Jesus as the point at which all the rich diversity of God’s revelations with his people in word and in deed converged; that is what *fulfilment* means in *Matthew*” (France 40-1). By the way, here France rightly called Jesus *Israel*, God’s son.

With fulfilment came a transfer and change of meaning. From his Sunday School days Senator Cruz cited Nb.24:9 without asking whether Balaam was a prophet to us, or whether his words for a Sinai-Israel, bear that same meaning for a post-Sinai ethnic-Israel.

With typology in mind, should we pray for the peace of Jerusalem or not? Does the Bible say that we should? On peace, a proof-text is provided, but a proof-text without a context is a pretext. At one level we *should* pray for the peace of Jerusalem, if we should pray for the peace of Beijing, Kabul, London, Moscow, or New York. But under the messianic covenant, social Jerusalem (Hagar) is no more and no less special than Jakarta. If prophetically God still has

plans for it, let us remember that he had had plans for pagan nations too, without calling them his covenant people.

On this latter point, besides *Amos* we can look to Neo-Assyria in the days of Jonah, when Nineveh was its royal capital. The story in brief is not that Jonah didn't wish to *preach* to them, but that he didn't wish to deliver a judgment against them (NLT beats the NIV), lest they take it to heart, repent, and have the judgement lifted. After all, Assyria had brutally mistreated Jonah's nation and deserved to die. But as Jonah feared and resented, Yahweh treated Nineveh the same way he'd have treated his own nation if it had sinned but repented (Jr.18:7-8). In that story, Yahweh repented—the Greek has *metanoō*—and withdrew his judgement (Jnh.3:10), and Jonah's heart learnt, then taught, that people are people.

Along the lines of Gal.6:9-10, Yahweh has never grown tired of doing good—which can include corrective condemnation and punishment—to all nations, peoples, and persons, especially once under Sinai and now under the new covenant. At the new level, the peace of spiritual Jerusalem (1 Tm.2:2) as the fulfilment of social Jerusalem, matters more than the anachronism of ethno-Zionism. It's bad to cherry pick Old Testament (OT) commands in the first place, overlooking that they exercised authority necessarily under the Sinai covenant, but not necessarily under the messianic covenant. To obey Ps.122:6, must we really pray for the peace of social Jerusalem? To obey Lv.12:3, must we really practice male human circumcision? But both were significant under Sinai, were prophetic of a messianic redefinition, and are now annulled. Bound to Sinai, Peter rebuked God (Ac.10:13-6); having annulled Sinai, God rebuked Peter.

So how should we treat Moses today? In John's Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, when Moses tries pushing Faithful around, Faithful should simply say, Hands off! Bunyan's context was a faithful pilgrim finding a Hill of Difficulty hard enough, without having Moses on their back.

Was Ac.15:19 a backdrop? Ac.15 taught that though covenantally Sinai's listed taboos were ended, yet as a missional principle they

were still to be respected if disrespect might needlessly stumble pre-Christian Jews. Similarly, Paul fitted in to different missional cultures and disciplines as far as his mission allowed (1 Cor.9:20-2). But unity must not taint theology. Internally we are free of Sinai.

Are ethnic-Jews free of Sinai? On the cross Yeshua cried out, *tetelestai*—It is finished; Job done. Please, I simply do not see any biblical justification to the idea that God continues a covenant with an ethnic people simply because they belong to a genome he used before the cross. Sure, there are texts some think cannot mean anything else than an ongoing covenant, but I now think otherwise. If ethnic-Jews cling on to the idea that they have a special covenant with Yahweh, that obligates them (Rm.14:23) but it doesn't obligate God. Similarly, if divorced you might cling on to your former spouse as if still your spouse, but it doesn't obligate your former spouse. Former is former.

But the term covenant is often a little fuzzy to folk, even to some Bible translators. Let's be clear from the start that we're not talking about agreements, but about covenants. And it's really important to think in terms of covenants, conforming our ideas to the Bible.

Covenant	Contract
describes relationship	describes transaction
is for relationship	is for items
is person-orientated	is thing-orientated
demands loyalty	demands performance
has no fixed end	has a fixed end

With covenants, the inner relationship is about the two parties, and loyalty—not supply and demand; not produce and performance—is key. Strictly speaking a vassal—a subservient party—cannot *break* their covenant, though they can *violate* it. Ethnic-Israel was Yahweh's vassal. And for gross violation, Yahweh was entitled to annul, to terminate, the covenant. Some Bible versions, such as LEB/NABRE/NIV/NKJV/NRSV, make this clearer than others. With this in mind, let's move to marriage.

### Covenant and Marriage

Each act of human sexual intercourse outside of marriage, is of course a moral violation against the *ought*. Even within marriage there can be violations against the *should*. I guess that for about 10 lost years I, fearing yet yearning to marry, was personally put off marrying by witnessing family sinful divorce, even alas at the Christian level. Fearing lest I too should prove faithless to someone, I remained celibate and single.

Not being islands to ourselves, in various ways the thorny topic of divorce has harmed families and others. Nevertheless the thorn of divorce can help us understand the rose of covenant. The answer to whether marriage, being a covenant, can be sinlessly annulled, and if so on what ground or grounds, can help us to see whether God himself could ever have sinlessly annulled any covenant, even covenant highlighted by the term, everlasting.

Surely all God's direct works are sinless. But if all divorce is sinful, can Yahweh be sinless if he has divorced, annulled a covenant? As for marriage being a covenant, besides biblical texts—and for Pr.2:17 and Mal.2:14 I recommend the ERV/NABRE/NKJV—the marriage analogy is clear throughout Scripture.

Certainly at least death invalidates marriage, although Mormons and Sadducees might disagree. Does divorce also invalidate, or using the better word *annul*, marriage? Is divorce a type of death?

### What marriage isn't

To the subjective worldview which surrounds us, marriage seems manmade plastic, to be chucked or reshaped according to our whims. We must unpick its definitions to return to objective truth. So, dismissing the poison of subjectivism brewed in the West, let us first objectively define what marriage isn't, debunking hedonistic SexEd. Now, if someone asks me, *Do you disagree with Homosexual Marriage?* my logical response is, *I disagree with You*. Why? Because how they phrased the question, presumes that the idea can have real life.

I disagree with their presumption, since God is, is uncreated, and created marriage. Human attempts to redefine marriage (or divorce) must redefine God as meaningless, and thus redefine man as meaningless—since man without God would be meaningless. Yet though morality without God would be meaningless, we're told it's morally meaningful to redefine marriage without God! Thus we legislate as real what can't be real. In vain we speak in faith as if God. But I do believe that the *concept*, homosexual marriage, can and does exist within the realm of imagination, subreality.

Too often we are taught to think as plastics; that all ideas are plastic; that reality is plastic. But objectivism counts, not the folly of subjectivism. "If there is no objective standard, then our choice between one ideology and another becomes a matter of arbitrary taste. Our battle for democratic ideals against Nazi ideals has been a waste of time, because the one is no better than the other. Nor can there ever be any real improvement or deterioration: if there is no real goal you can't get either nearer to it or further from it. In fact, there is no real reason for doing anything at all" (C S Lewis).<sup>4</sup>

Are social jailers trying to lock us in to a delusion, into a false freedom that, as psychiatrist and ex-homosexual, Dr John White said, enslaves? Speaking of escape into fantasy world, Arthur C Clarke said that "nothing could be more ridiculous than the accusation sometimes made against science fiction that it is merely escapist. That charge can indeed be made against much fantasy—but so what? There are times (this century has provided a more than ample supply) when some form of escape is essential, and any art form that supplies it is not to be despised. And as C S Lewis (creator of both superb science fiction and fantasy) once remarked to me: 'Who are the people most opposed to escapism? Jailors!'" (Clarke 405).

Fantasy, a holiday land from the real, becomes an ideological tyrant if enthroned as real. I think of C S Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, where through the darkness the sailors discovered

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<sup>4</sup> <https://crystalkirgiss.com/2022/12/23/c-s-lewis-a-christmas-sermon-for-pagans/>

the Dark Island, “the Island where Dreams....come to life, come real”, and from which the sailors fled in panic. Subreality is below reality, and reality is below suprareality. And when subreality enters the real, the real became hell. But when suprareality enters the real, it become heaven and glorifies reality.

If we would think properly, we must believe that there *is* a proper. That is, we must think objectivity. Arguably there are three kinds of people in the world:

- Pagans: they are sick and might well know it;
- Christians: they have found the cure and probably know it;
- Post-Christians: they are sick and probably do not know it.

### *What marriage is*

Now, having removed the homosexual red herring from the net of reality, I affirm that the institution, the framework, marriage, was designed and defined by God for humanity—it’s not for eagles; it’s not for angels. Are all marriages made in heaven above? No. We can say that thunder and lightning are made in the heavens above, but that is not say that every marriage or lightning bolt is conceived and aimed by God, though the framework is his. At most he matches once in a blue moon. Sometimes he simply gives an advisory thumbs up, maybe a helping hand.

Whether we are personally disinterested, delighted, or distressed, by marriage, what does the Bible reveal? Revelation counts, not the folly that marriage is a legal construct, or that man’s wisdom and authority can upstage God’s, or that clergy can marry couples. So now let’s look at this example of covenant which we still know something about, marriage. Here to some extent I urge some advice given to Skywalker—“clear your mind”, feel the Bible.

### *Marriage is for life*

Misinformation can be dangerously misleading. Sacerdotal history has falsely fed Western society with the idea that ecclesiastics can create marriages. I used to wonder whether

couples not *married in a Christian church*, were properly married. Were Boaz and Ruth, being before the church, properly married?

Eventually the West asked, *If one set of human beings, Christians, can create marriages, why can't another set of human beings? And if we can create, can we not define?* I later asked, *Why did Jesus speak of couples being joined by God, before he created the Christian church and Christian sacraments?* Eventually I saw that the church *can't* create marriages but should discern marriage.

Church and State however can play good parts in affirming, registering, and supporting, marriages. And though its borderline is fuzzy, marriage precedes wedding, and wedding is its second stage. Sacerdotes and State often misunderstand this, thinking marriage to be a sacrament they perform, or a civil contract they authorise. We must look with covenant eyes.

In 1997 (stardate 50975.2 as Sci-Fi trekkies might know), *Deep Space 9*, a Star Trek mixture of harmful vice-based philosophy and some happier themes, has a fun line where a Ferengi named Rom nervously asks the captain, “Would you marry me, I mean us, I mean, would you perform our wedding ceremony?” (5.26). Rom finally stumbled out a truth he never fully realised. By God’s design, marriage is only created by individual couples who come together in a heterosexual covenant—and covenant implies lifelong union.

Marriage has a fundamental connect to the Bible. Poetically, Yahweh married Ethnic-Israel. Yes, I know it was not a physical union, merely a marriage metaphor, but it was a metaphysical union, either based on human marriage, or the basis for human marriage (Eph.5:32). And note this: *It would be rather silly to speak of a third party ‘marrying them’, though there were third-party witnesses, which is what a wedding is for.* Their marriage, so to speak, was a covenant, not a contract. Witnesses are as the pile of stones between Jacob and Laban—as was God (Gen.31:51-2). But a witness maketh not a marriage.

Yes, the covenant unity of Yahweh and Israel was symbolised as husband and wife, sometimes as two wives (eg *Hosea*; Jr.3:8). On the

human level, marriage covenant is a *companionship thing*. It was not good for the single man to live alone (Gen.2:18), and God was not enough. Whatever Christian songwriters sing, we need more.

Poetically put, *man* as male (*ish*), needed to be told of his need for companionship more than women have needed telling. Of course woman (*ishah*) needs man, too, as analogically the church needs Christ (Eph.5:22-33). Might it be that analogically Christ—God the son as a *human being*—needs the church too for companionship?

Pr.2:17 and Mal.2:14 speak of companionship, which some Bible versions happily show. Haplessly, however, some employ what unqualified by *marriage* has become an anti-marriage—or at best a sub-marriage—tag, namely the term *partner*. That is a handy term for correctivists to dump marriage as the only moral base for human sexual intercourse. Avoiding terms such as *marriage* and *spouse*, some adverts happily tell you that your *partner* would love such and such—buy, buy, buy. The advertisers assume fornication to be perfectly acceptable, a lowest common denominator in a theatre lacking moral or immoral divide.

We ought never to treat our fellow human beings at that abusively shallow level, denying their humanity. It certainly doesn't help children, who need good committed parenting and nurture, to be born into such weak unions which set such a shallow example for them. Should we not tell advertisers that a *marriage* partner should not be confused with a mere *partner*, as if one term fits all? Unchallenged, they preach that mothers without wedding rings model good motherhood—*Do thou likewise!* It's so sad.

To be sure, a Fantine can lovingly give her utmost for her Cosette, but they still number among *les misérables*: Cosette was saved by grace. Christians should not be squeezed into the world's mould; they should let God's spirit renew their minds, to decontaminate them. Following God's spirit, Bible translators should wisely avoid blurring the distinction and keep clear blue water.

Thus for Pr.2:17 ('*allûp*), CEV/ERV/NABRE/NCV/NKJV/NLT are the best, and for Mal.2:14b (*haberet*), ERV/LEB/NABRE/NKJV/NRSV are acceptable. But the ERV adds a foreign idea about

girlfriends becoming wives, and the LEB's *marriage partner* reverts from an age of moral contrast, to a mere *partner*, while the CEB/NIV/NLT are downright loose by the unqualified *partner*, but at least immediately define as wife by *marriage covenant/vows*.

We should not affirm *partner* instead of *spouse*, and "in particular should be wary of any moral consensus of an ungodly society in a fallen world" (Holmes 60). Marriage is a life pattern *set up by God* but *entered into* by the couple concerned, not begun by God or by any third-party. Biblically "marriage is a covenant motif (eg Jr.2:1-3; 3:1-2; Ezk.16)" (Motyer 1993:397). All this said, some officially *partners*, don't know that they have married.

### *Divorce is for death*

In Lyne Anderson's *Rose Garden* (1967), she never promised her boyfriend a rosy rose-garden life, for "along with the sunshine, there's gotta be a little rain some time." Sunshine and rain travels into the thorny rose garden of marriage, as her song implied. For marriage has seasons—days can be seasons. There will be sunny days, sad days, dull day, foggy days, stormy days. Storms might bring lightning strikes. Too many strikes might pose a threat to life and limb; a moth too often burnt by a candle might feel safer being a cold fish below the waves. And if too many dull days incline one party to seek sunshine elsewhere, the other party might incline towards divorce from disloyalty. Big issue responses.

I have covered marriage more in *Israel's Gone Global*, and I broadly recommended Jay Adams' *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage*. And here I wish to gladly affirm his insightful description of marriage as a covenant of companionship. The West, long under cultural Marxism, tends to demote marriage as being a social contract, and promote human sexual intercourse as predating marriage.

What is human sexual intercourse? Let's go beyond mere biology, which we share with the mere animal world. It is like entering someone else's home, or someone entering your home, in a profound and often vibrant way. Downplaying the profound and overplaying the vibrant, the West often condones and commends nonmarital human sexual intercourse, and ethically casual, often

indoctrinates unprotected school children, supressing their naturally protective parents even by prison, lest parents interfere with its ideology and consequent industry.

The term *consensual*, at best downplays a deception, a scam, a theft, a depreciation of humanness which at worst is a violation under protest. But voluntary or involuntarily, it can be as pleasurable as eating the sweet icing of sex without the cake of marriage. Under hedonism, pleasure theoretically justifies all, and under nihilism, dominance theoretically justifies all. The term *consensual*, can cover up a multitude of sins, for like the often-damaging COVID19 ‘vaccination’ program, it is far from *fully informed*. Schools seldom *inform* that beyond the biology, each home is an *imago dei*, a real human being in God’s likeness, and prone to psychological harm by de-enrichment, even if aborting a baby is dismissed as mere removal of unwanted material.

But on marriage, let’s move at some ideas of covenant divorce.

### *Marriage and King Henry 8*

Roman Catholicism, basically using the term *water-baptised* to mean *Christian*, deems marriage to be valid within four categories:

- Marriage (secular) made when both were unbaptised.
- Marriage (secular) made after only one was unbaptised.
- Marriage (sacramental) made after both were baptised. And if non-consummated, dissoluble.
- Marriage (sacramental) made after both were baptised. And if consummated, indissoluble.

Some other denominations also deem that different types of marriage are accorded different links to sanctity. Let’s declutter.

We still speak ecclesiastically of getting *married* in church, or of a ‘minister’ *marrying* folk, rather than biblically of someone *conducting a wedding*. *Joined by God* (Mk.10:9) means an overall divine sanction on marriage, sealing within his envelope. Atheists, Christians, Eskimos, Hindus, Polygamists—any couple who *covenant* interpersonal sexual relations (if viable and permissible) with each other, are joined. Marriage is a human covenant.

Covenant is not a contract: it is for life. And fidelity, non-betrayal, is paramount. God requires each couple who have entered into his institution of marriage (thus within his binding, his envelope) to keep faith with the other. God does not take each couple into the land of marriage, but he does grant free citizenship to each couple who mutually enter this open-border, a citizenship with privileges and obligations. The institution is by him; individuals plug into it for better or worse.

But back to Rome. Hold to the idea that a consummated sacramental marriage (holy matrimony) is indissoluble, an idea which rejects the idea of absolute divorce. It allows that if the relationship wasn't sacramental marriage, it may be annulled.<sup>5</sup> This approach has had some interesting outcomes, as in the split between Rome and Canterbury, an interesting time in global politics, replete with assassinations in high places. Let's revisit.

King Henry 8 was desperate for a son to be his heir, so as to avoid future civil unrest. He had married Catherine of Aragon, widowed from a once young but healthy Arthur who had probably died of some contagion. Arthur had been his older brother, and Rome had had a problem with permitting Henry's marriage, citing Lv.20:21 as a stumbling block. Still, Catherine was worth catching.

Although the Levitical law was specific to Ethnic-Israel so was not a global command, in those days it was deemed relevant to the discussion. Wishing to marry her, Henry convinced Rome that Catherine had never consummated her marriage, so he argued

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<sup>5</sup> Some confuse annulment, with Rome's *Declaration of Nullity*. But nullity is not taken by Rome to end marriage, but to formally end—*void ab initio*—what was merely pseudomarriage, never marriage. Nullity is a doctrine which might find more uptake, now that the West has bought into the conflicting idea that the concept, *homosexual marriage*, is valid in reality, and assumes that backtracking would mean divorcing real marriages, rather than declaring an error of judgment which sadly led to pseudomarriage. Happily many countries in good sense do not legitimise the concept, *homosexual marriage*.

that she hadn't had a full marriage, so could sacramentally marry himself as brother-in-law: "Antecedent and perpetual impotence to have [sexual] intercourse, whether on the part of the man or the woman, whether absolute or relative, nullifies marriage by its very nature" (Code of Canon Law, 1084 §1).

Wishing to divorce Catherine once he had lost hope in her bearing him a son, he tried the line that his marriage wasn't sacramental. Averse to divorcing from the sacramental, to *annul* rather than to *divorce* (this assumes a false distinctive) was the preferred aim. He spun the line that Rome had been right all along and that she and Arthur had had a consummated marriage. He now backed Lv.20:21, claiming that her union to himself was only sub-marriage. Rome was not amused; nor was Catherine's royal father. To try for a son with a younger model, Henry began to sideline Rome's high authority, by claiming from an old legend that Glastonbury had a higher claim to Church authority: it certainly sported a Christian church of pre-Saxon date.

Henry also had to convince Canterbury (leading the church in England) to side with him in ditching Catherine. Those who disagreed would pay dear, such as William Tyndale, who took a Lutheran position and rightly concluded that Henry and Catherine were truly married, with no biblical grounds for Henry to divorce. By the bye, the lady had good biblical right to divorce Henry for his affairs, a right she never invoked.

But Thomas Cranmer, the first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury, officially backed Henry on May 23, 1533—divorce annulment by denying marriage to have been marriage, was deemed to be the way forward, ticking the legal boxes. Cranmer also backed the *Act of Supremacy* of November 28, 1534, asserting a divine right of monarchs and exalting the English crown above the church in England, and the church in England above the church in Rome. When Henry and Catherine's daughter Mary became Queen Mary 1 of England, she took old Cranmer down.

For what it's worth, it seems to me that Anne Boleyn, who became Henry's next wife, was sexually pure, seriously wished to save sex

for marriage, and had her wish, beginning with a secret marriage which predated Henry's *official* divorce and their *official* wedding. Rome denied that Henry and Catherine had divorced, and deemed their daughter Mary to be legitimate, conceived in full marriage, and disallowing polygamy deemed Anne's daughter Elizabeth to be illegitimate. Anne didn't last long. Henry used a claim of Anne's sexual infidelity to ditch her, so as to try for a son through a third wife. The claim was probably false, but at least he truly saw divorce for infidelity to be biblically justified.

In 1536, to pave the way for a legitimate son whom he hoped to gain through his mistress Jane Seymour, Henry had Cranmer delist Anne as his wife, had Elizabeth listed as an illegitimate daughter of a sub-marriage union, and also had a capital treason charge pushed through. Henry evoked the nullity idea in tandem with Levitical law, perhaps this time based on his previous sexual union with the sister of Anne, Mary Boleyn—though technically Henry had never married his mistress Mary—or claiming that Anne was guilty of an incestuous affair with her brother. That would have been the idea of kinship/consanguinity (Lv.18:18,9).<sup>6</sup> His idea of sub-marriage was unbiblical.

Some may liken Anne to Princess Diana, whose husband's disloyal fornications led directly to her own unhappiness, and indirectly to her eventual sexual-moral collapse and to her death. But whether Anne so sinned or not, her daughter's honour was eventually restored, and after Queen Mary 1 who was previously restored to valid succession, she later became Queen Elizabeth 1.

Because of the ecclesiastical play on the word annul, some suggest that the ditty, [King Henry 8 / to six wives he was wedded. / One died, one survived, / two divorced, two beheaded], should really be, [King Henry 8 / to three wives he was wedded. / One died, one survived / two annulled, two beheaded]. That amendment works on

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<sup>6</sup> Incidentally neither Abraham nor Jacob complied with *Leviticus* here, but then they were never under it. These laws of sins under Sinai, had under Sinai meaning and teaching, but weren't in themselves sins.

the idea that Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, and later Anne of Cleves, had simply cohabited under the guise of marriage, or at the most as substandard, noncanonical, marriage.

### *Divorce and Desiderius*

Sadly, Henry never fully knew what divorce actually was, nor fully what marriage and sexual purity, actually was—though would he have favoured sexual holiness anyway? Henry looking to Rome for insight was like the magi looking to Herod for the one born king. Rome was a far from reliable guide. Biblical knowledge was effectively Rome’s unaccountable monopoly in the West, but it wasn’t too bothered about doing its job.

In politics the Pope’s laws seemed more important than God’s laws. Yet “forasmuch as the Bible contains Christ—that is all that is necessary for salvation—it is necessary for all people, not for priests alone. It alone is the supreme law that is to rule Church, State, and Christian life, without human traditions and statutes.” Thus spake John Wycliffe, who had challenged monopoly access, as did William Tyndale in Henry’s days.

Forasmuch as Wycliffe meant salvation into Christianity, I agree. But we may debate whether, shall we say, Christian law should rule any nation as such. Tyndale desired even peasants to exceed biblically illiterate popes in both biblical lessons and lifestyle, to discern spiritual honey from spiritual poison, and to see God’s light amidst the world’s darkness. Both men challenged us to be biblically enlightened and to rise above Rome’s then fog.

Outside that fog let us see that marriage is marriage, that marriage is covenant, and that covenant can be annulled. Predating Henry, Joseph considered divorcing Mary his wife—not ditching his fiancée. “The equivalence of betrothal and marriage is...reflected in Mt.1:18-25, which shows that Mary’s betrothal to Joseph made her his wife, even though they did not have sexual relations until after the birth of Jesus” (VanGemeren). Here the NABRE/NKJV, and more so the older RSV, put to shame the confused NIV and utterly inept CEV/NLT. Had Joseph divorced Mary, and had his suspicions been correct, his divorce would have been like he himself, righteous.

Far more helpful than a confused Rome and a confused king, from Scripture the C15-6 Christian Humanist, Desiderius Erasmus, divided divorce between sinless and sinful, and biblically highlighted the two sinless grounds. A humanist, incidentally, was basically a type of scholar who traced streams to their source.

**Ground 1:** Sinless divorce can be a sinless response to the sin of *porneia*. The biblical base here is in the simple C1 context of Jew with Jew, sharers still in Yahweh's covenant. Jesus taught the general global rule (Mt.19:9), that generally divorce is adultery—that is, a breach of covenant, severe treachery against marriage loyalty. But, he added, though *generally* covenant repudiation—that is, divorce—is sinful, the acceptable worldwide *exception* is where at least one party had sinfully violated their covenant by sexual union and/or replacement outside of their covenant.

Picture a bridge, a union, between two people. They built the bridge by God's design—breaking it was not permitted. General Rule: they ought not demolish it. Exceptional Rule: if either party violates the holy bridge by sexual disloyalty polluting it (*porneia*), God permits its demolition, does not require it to be rebuilt between that couple, and permits them to each build a new bridge with a different person. Some add confusing talk about only *innocent parties* being permitted to marry another person.

Because this exception to the rule of divorce being sinful, was only recorded in *Matthew*, it may be called the Matthean Exception, an exception taught by the lord unto Matthew.

You can find something similar in Jr.3:8, of Yahweh divorcing his wife because she had sinned sexually—*porneia*. I must quickly add that Jr.3:8 is neither about a *biological* wife, nor about *biological* sex. Jeremiah's terms were using human imagery to picture something of the spiritual connection which had been severely violated. A wide range of illustrations were used in the OT. The same wife could be likened a son, or even to a cluster of chickens! Similarly the New Testament (NT) can liken Christians to a bunch of sacred stones, as well as to body parts. We can speak of items costing an arm and a leg.

**Ground 2:** Sinless divorce can be a sinless response to covenant-divide. Paul covered marital conflicts between couples who share the same Christian covenant. For them, separation for issues of addiction or abuse, are I think permitted. Sinless separation or sinful divorce demands celibacy or reunion with the [former] spouse—a residual obligation. In short, to replace them will be sexual sin, porneia, whether with or without sexual intercourse.

Think Bridge. The covenant-bridge that was built has fallen into disrepair (separation), or been wrongly demolished (divorce). It is best to repair the bridge; it is sad if it is demolished; it is good if it is rebuilt; it is downright bad—adultery by porneia—if a bridge is built with another party, if rebuilding with the former spouse was a residual obligation.

However, if only one party shares the Christian covenant, there is a covenant divide, potentially endangering the peace and loyalty of the covenant. If there is a believer/nonbeliever conflict, Paul taught that the believer should not initiate divorce, but if the nonbeliever does, then the believer should expedite divorce, which will for them be sinless, will not oblige reunion with the nonbeliever, and will permit sinless marriage to someone else (1 Cor.7:15)—preferably to a fellow Christian. Because only Paul recorded this covenant-divide exception to the general rule of divorce being sinful, it may be called the Pauline Exception, an exception taught by the lord unto Paul.

By the way, by arguing for salvation advantages if resisting the Pauline Exception to divorce, some misread Paul. Paul neither said that remaining married would guarantee Christian salvation to unbelieving spouses, nor to unbelieving children. At best Christian spouses are onsite witnesses to Christ, shining imperfectly the gospel 24/7. For the relevant passage—1 Cor.7:12-6—I'm happy with the CEV/NCV, but unhappy with the NKJV/NLT.

Other than from a sinless divorce...

- any man who divorces commits adultery if he marries someone else (Mk.10:11/Lk.16:18): she shares his guilt;

- any woman who divorces commits adultery if she marries someone else (Mk.10:12): he shares her guilt (Mt.5:32/ Lk.16:18);
- a divorced wife plays her part in adultery, certainly if<sup>7</sup> marrying someone else, perhaps by simply living with residual unmet obligation to the prior covenant (Mt.5:32).

In God's sight, they who shoot down the albatross wear it around their neck. They can even share the shame with their new and former spouse. Thus, the imperative about knowing on what real grounds any divorced person stands. Sinful covenant annulment (divorce) is possible but shameful. Sinless covenant annulment (divorce) is possible and shameless.

Divorce and remarriage can be a “can of worms” largely because many marry without knowing what marriage is. When working through such situations it’s wise to “work on one worm at a time—eventually you’ll have an empty can” (Adams 41).

In later life C S Lewis, who taught me so much, had difficulties with divorce and remarriage, his vision clouded by church glasses. I suspect that he did too much dogmatic theology (theological dogma of the church), and not enough systematic theology: systematic theology should judge dogmatic theology. He was unhappy that denominations differed as to divorce: “It is a great pity that Christians should disagree about such a question.” But he was happy that they held the organic view that it is “like cutting up a living body”. And he was happy that they did not hold the organisational idea that it is like “dissolving a business partnership, or even deserting a regiment” (Lewis 2002:105).

His own marriage to Joy Davidman, a Christian divorcee, was complicated by sub-biblical confusion. Initially they underwent a civil wedding, submarriage in that they merely bent the British

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<sup>7</sup> Perhaps an *if* is assumed, since the financial circumstances of the day normally necessitated such remarriage—the verb (in the Middle Voice) bespeaks an action she does, or allows done unto, herself.

system in order to get a British working permit for Joy. Later they both married without realising it, and felt that a church wedding was needed to make them truly husband and wife.

The Bishop of Oxford was bound by the sub-biblical idea that both church and state could create marriages, and that divorce was a sin which debarred church-authorised but not state-authorised, marriage. He advised Lewis to be satisfied with his secular ‘marriage’. And wouldn’t it be silly for the church to marry a married couple? Finally, an Anglican priest (Peter Bide) offered to *marry* them, risking his bishop’s wrath and showing his false belief that the church *creates* marriages. “When were you married?”, often means, “When was your marriage celebrated/registered?” But covenantally, Joy and Jack married between their 1956 civil and 1957 church weddings, Joy having sinlessly divorced (Bill’s infidelity). Anyway, hopefully I have shed light on what marriage is, since understanding marriage, good to understand in itself, is also key to understanding covenant in general and messianic salvation in particular. If Yahweh was sinless to divorce Israel (Jr.3:8) and to warn her sister Judah—yep, gender analogies were fluid—he would have been sinless to divorce from, to annul, the Sinai covenant. Whatever the gender of the envelope—the picture—it is the inner message which has always counted. Let’s move on to the biblical doctrine of covenant in relation to Sinai. The church had big problems on this, as *Galatians* shows. And it still does.

## Chapter 3      Israel 3: Jesus-Israel

### The Great Servant

- Israel 1      Jacob-Israel—Jacob the man
- Israel 2      Ethnic-Israel—Jacob's twelve sons and descendants
- Israel 3      Jesus-Israel—born within that special identity

“... Listen, all you nations far away.... Yahweh named me while I was still in my mother's womb.... He told me, 'Israel, you are my servant. I will show my glory through you.'... Now he told me, 'You are an important servant to me to bring back the tribes of Jacob, to bring back the people of Israel who are left alive. But, more importantly, I will make you a light for all nations to show people all over the world the way to be saved.'” (NCB: Is.49:1,3,6)

“Jesus is presented in the Fourth Gospel as the successor of Israel, or, better, as the true Israel.... Even the old Bethel...has been superseded” (Carson 1991:162,164). Yeshua was special, not simply a messiah.

There were and are in fact, many christs, many messiahs. Each king under Sinai of worldly Jerusalem, was a christ, an *anointed*, which is what the word means. Within Israel, priests were also anointed, set aside, whether a Jehoiada to Yahwism (2 Kg.11:16), or whether a Mattan to such as Baalism (18). King Cyrus, though never a Yahwist under Sinai, was anointed by Yahweh to be a shepherd under Yahweh (Is.45:1; 44:28).

In fact all Christians are anointed, chrismed, set aside by the spirit unto God (1 Jhn.2:20,27). They are thus priests; all Christians are thus ministers. I believe in the priesthood of all believers; I believe in the ministry—the servanthood—of all believers. Church ceremonies can make Church anointing, but don't make Christian anointing, and Elizabeth 2's church anointing didn't make her anointed by God as queen: but he had made her a priest.

So there have been many messiahs. But let's look at the idea that Jesus, Yeshua, was and indeed is, *the messiah*, *the christ*, *the anointed*, unique among the many. We'll look at the idea that Jesus in Israel's *individual sense*, was face to face with Israel in Israel's *ethnic sense*.

### A bias for or against Israel 2?

Just now I've mixed up some Hebrew and Gentile terms to pick up here on the idea of perspectives. I suspect that overreaction to the devilish C20 holocaust has, in Christian circles, become a sympathy vote, inflating ethno-Zionism and the itch to be Hebrew. Golden-mouthed John Chrysostom, whose mouth was sometimes dross and whose heart was sometimes superstitious (eg *relics; signum crucis*),<sup>8</sup> lamented that in the C4 many Christians were imperilled by a rampant Judaism propagated by ethnic-Jews who were a vibrant element of Roman society from top to bottom.

In his days, many had grown up with the pagan idea that longevity made religions more venerable: was Christianity but a child to a respected Judaic parent? Many Christians had a superstitious captivation towards Judaism's aura, with interfaith as a one-way street. John's fears were well founded, but ironically his public sermons to avoid it inspired curiosity by Judaic-pliables to join it.

To understand John, we should bear in mind that, like some other big bishops, he had been trained as a classical rhetor, a sophist, an orator. His style reflected this flourish, this colour, which included exaggeration and hyperbole to highlight points. Many preachers doubled as performers, and their audiences were their art critics.

Some of John's "sermons, usually entitled *Against the Jews*, (Against the Judaic-leaning) were preached against Judaic-leaning [Christians],

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<sup>8</sup> Curiously Judaic Jews had claimed possession of the bones of the Maccabean Martyrs, and magic through the bones. These ethno-Jewish folk had been martyred in 166 BC in defence of the Sinaitic temple. Christians captured these bones (relics), and claimed to have captured their magic. Judaic Jews claimed that the magic was legitimate but did not legitimately transfer, and claimed to be the rightful custodians of such magical bones, since the martyrs had died for *Sinai*. Yes, but arguably they had poured out their blood for the sake of *Sinai* and thus for the christ of *Sinai*. Squabbling over ashes, dust, or dead bones, was superstitious nonsense. Neither side had a valid claim to magic. Like Sauron's ring, those bones should have been destroyed.

not against the [ethnic] Jews, and were prompted by the specific circumstances in Antioch prior to the celebration of Judaic festivals. All these homilies except for one, Homily 3 on Passover, were preached in autumn, when, as John noted in the first sermon, the Judaic festivals ‘follow one after another in succession’ (Wilken 67).

Alas, had John used a more specific word to differentiate religion from race, we would have been better served. By ‘Jews’ he meant ‘proto-Judaic, or Judaic, Jews’. Ironically Wilken too, often failed to differentiate between the religious *Judaism* and the racial term *Jew*, besides ignoring the Israelite term and calling the OT a *Jewish* book. Some words are simply too blunt for purpose.

Lamentably even today many use the differentiating phrase *Jew* or *Christian*, a category error, as if either both are *religious* terms, or both are *racial* terms, so mutually exclusive. No, not all ethnic-Jews are *Judaics* (*Judaic-Jews*), and some ethnic-Gentiles are *Judaic-Gentiles*. Yet John’s words, colourful but unlamentable rhetoric in his days, are lamentable in ours.

As a little aside, the NT means a number of things under the blunt term, *Joudaioi*. The bluntest English Bible versions simply translate as *Jews*. Nowadays some uninformed folks are too quick to jump on the apostle John in particular, and claim that he—though ethnically *he* was a *Jew*—was antisemitic. For putting John’s use into John’s contexts, I’d use the NLT/CEV/CEB/NIV.

As mentioned, Wilken himself suffered from imprecise language, not least in calling direct physical healing by God, magic (87). Consider this passage, where by *Judaism* he actually meant not what began in AD 70 as a Pharisaic religion, but *Sinicism* which predated the term *Jews*—incidentally Moses was not a *Jew*; nor was Abraham an Israelite. “For [some Christians] it was axiomatic that certain aspects of Judaism should continue to be observed by the followers of Jesus, as Jesus himself had taught. ‘Do not suppose that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets: I did not come to abolish, but to complete. I tell you this: so long as heaven and earth endure, not a letter, not a stroke, will disappear from the Law until all that must happen has happened’ (Mt.5:17-8).” (Wilken 69)

Axiomatic my foot! With Don Carson I hold that Jesus meant that Sinai couldn't be altered before the cross, and that he respected Sinai so much that his death—which it prophesied—would kill off Sinai, fulfilling its mission, opening up a new and living way. Once the wheat it prophesied was reaped, Sinai-chaff would be burnt up, reducing weeds, diseases, and biomass, making sowing easier (Mt.3:12). To fulfil (*plērō*), meant *to end*.

Jesus did not teach that certain aspects of *Sinaism* should continue to be observed by his followers, nor about any aspects of *Judaism* which was born after Jerusalem died. C2 Irenaeus had known a few Christians of the Circumcision Party's mindset. They practiced physical circumcision under Sinai, loved *Matthew*, yet hated Paul. Basil the Great warned Bishop Apollinaris against going too far in *that* direction—even Christian leaders can be swayed by error. Some Christians, *contra* Christ, followed Sinaism to some extent. But back to Chrysostom. For pastoral and theological concerns, he was motivated towards a bias against Israel 2's Judaism. Israel 2 had once been God's covenant people. Covenantally it had become as spiritually goy/Gentile/Hagar as any other people. Christianity was Sinai's successor, and turning to Judaism was a return to spiritual Egypt by silly Christian sheep seeking Judaic shepherds. His language was the publicly expected style, and whether for or against, orators were expected to perform with truths or half-truths, innuendoes, guiltiness or guiltlessness by association, abusive or complimentary language, malicious or magnanimous comparisons, and in all, with excess and exaggeration, to make the bad sound badder and the good sound gooder. A balanced realism was unacceptably bland. Good sermons had to be entertaining. Christians who added synagogue to church, were a disease within the church, contaminated and contaminating, spiritually sick and in need of healing. Christian Arians were similarly pictured. The Roman emperor Julian the Apostate, pictured Christians the same way. Cultural Marxists picture Christians the same way. Sadly, Chrysostom was remembered out of context by later generations.

Some nowadays suffer from a bias the opposite way, as if as Egyptians needing Ethnic-Israel to save their land. Nowadays, when it comes to choosing terms, Ethno-Zionists tend to prefer *Yeshua Messiah*, sometimes—as in the Complete Jewish Bible—even to the exclusion of *Jesus Christ*. I guess that some wish to ground all Christians within a Sinai mindset, as a branch to a tree, perhaps as the Circumcision Party did in Paul’s days. But is Christianity a subset, or a new set? Let’s spend some time on this.

Firstly as to terms, which can be dividing lines. It is interesting how we bias our terms. On the plus side, Hebrew/Aramaic terms such as *messiah*, can helpfully remind us to think about ethnic roots, of which translator John Wesley Etheridge reminded us in 1846. So, in his incarnation mode, should we speak of God’s son as *Jesus*, or as *Yeshua*, or as both? To avoid either name falling into personal disuse, I scatter in both names, favouring my roots. For the Gospels the CEV/ERV/NABRE/NIV/NLT/NRSV paint the best picture, and for the NT overall, the old HCSB.

### Is Jesus Israel 3?

Bias aside, let us look at a few indicators that *Israel* was a prophetic term that should be applied to Jesus messiah. And if so, we might ask whether the former torch bearer of the title has been sidelined, even as the physical temple doubled as a prophetic term for the true temple, and was sidelined once Yeshua had taken up the role.

Indeed some like C4 John Chrysostom took the idea that Christ who had built the church which no one was able to destroy, had also destroyed the temple which no one was able to rebuild. C’mon, Chrys, just because Christ had prophesied what *would* be (Mt.24:3), it hardy meant that it would be because *he* would do it. Christ also prophesied his church’s persecution! Even talk of the Gentiles’ season (Lk.21:23-4) might have meant no more than when their anger died down after the ethno-Jewish revolts (C1-2).

Moreover, Judaic Jews could reasonably claim that Sinai had sometimes operated without a temple (eg Ezr.1:2). Indeed, after its second demolition under Titus, some fell back to Hos.6:6 (quoted by Jesus: Mt.9:13; 12:7), as if Yahweh was happy to forego animal/

grain sacrifices, as long as at least the better sacrifices of mercy were made. However, that argument perhaps raises a question as to why 'lesser' sacrifices were mandated in the first place.

Perhaps we should say that they were mandated under Sinai for restoration-forgiveness within that covenant, but were spiritually meaningless if not in line with inner attitude. That is to say that Hosea's 'better' meant *undergirding*, not *replacing*. In short, under Sinai good hearts without temple sacrifices metaphorically had crippled bodies, while good hearts with temple sacrifices metaphorically had healthy bodies. Hence Ezra rebuilt the temple to decripple himself and his people. Lacking a temple, Sinaites remain crippled, even if in fellowship with Yahweh.

Christian, Judaic, and Pagan sides, wrongly assumed that rebuilding Jerusalem's temple would demolish Christianity by demolishing Christ's prophethood. During his 18 months in power, Emperor Julian tried to rebuild it to relegitimize the temple over Christianity—which he had forsaken—and to falsely brand Christ as a false prophet for what he hadn't prophesied.

Julian's attempt, which died with his death, was not for the love of Mordecai, but for the hate of Haman, so to speak. Though to be fair, he promoted animal sacrifices anyway, as if they were a way of putting your money where your prayer-mouth was, thus assuring the divinities of your sincerity. Worship should count. So perhaps he wished to give Judaic Jews the full blessings of his Empire, the better citizens to be. But for us, concluding that Jesus prevented Julian rebuilding that temple, is an unjustified God-in-the-gaps<sup>9</sup> argument and annoys ethno-Zionists praying for its rebuild. But holding that God had indeed forsaken that temple which had forsaken Christ, is justified whether it is pointlessly rebuilt or not.

But more to my point, did Jesus take up the role as Yahweh's true temple (Jhn.2:21)? Though the Christian scriptures are teeming with fibrous fulfilment-roots into the OT, not all people have accepted that prophetic script. For instance, dating from AD 70,

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<sup>9</sup> Put as god-of-the-gaps, is put as polytheism, as if different gods exist.

[Rabbinic] Judaism formed from what I call Israel 2, and is based on the idea that Yeshua, whom I call Israel 3, is not the messiah. Rabbinic Judaism leads the blind in spiritual fog.

Opposing Chrysostom, Judaic-Jews boasted that they alone had the true script, since they alone had the original language. But that the majority ethnic-Jewry continued to use Hebrew and Aramaic scripts, while Christians merely used translations, is neither here nor there, given that the translations basically were true to the authentic text, and that the OT is superseded as to covenant application. But to reduce religious conflict over meaning, Jerome improved translation policy by wisely translating directly from the OT in Hebrew.

### ***Is Israel 2 ditched and damned?***

I feel that the positive reasons to hold that Jesus was and is Israel 3 are easier to consider if we can see that such a third stage in God's plan would not overly damn, though it might ditch, the second stage, Israel 2. That in turn invites a look into in exclusivism. In exclusivism is an idea that allows ultimate salvation to be a general offer not to any stage of Israel. But for now, let's move on.

If you hear that Judaism is a blind alternative to Christianity, you might wonder why God has allowed his former people to largely become blind to his Israel plan. Was it just the folly of man? In fact, Paul taught that such blindness was actually in God's plan—the wisdom of God! But perhaps God's wisdom was based on man's folly, even as Jesus did not fully trust people, fully knowing their hearts (Jhn.2:24), and used their folly for his wisdom.

### ***The Great Reversal***

Reversal is a funny theme, and who cannot appreciate the sad irony when Babylon became Yahweh's army in order to punish the Jews, Yahweh's people (Jl.2:1,11)? We see this theme in the exodus of Moses and his people, too, when Yahweh hardened the already hard heart of Pharaoh, encouraging Pharaoh to dig himself deeper into his hole, to double down.

With the exodus of messiah and his people, as to why God actively blinded the eyes of the myopic Jews, you might wonder whether it was so that the Sinai tradition, now as chaff to wheat, did not undermine the new road of Israel. And you might wonder whether it was that before that, the ethnic-Gentiles had been blinded for similar reason by God's design. Had Sinai-Israel once been wheat?

Such questions lead us down a rabbit hole of salvation's plan. Indeed, many holes can take us into the warren to explore. Here the key Greek terms vary between *sklērunō* (multiple *sclerosis* is about tissue *hardening*) in Rm.9:18, and *pōrō/pōrōsis* in 11:7,25 respectively.

Most Bible versions follow the formally correct C16 Geneva Bible, rather than the C16 Bishops Bible, translating as *obstinacy/hardening/stubbornness/resistance*. But "in modern English idiom, *blindness* is freely used to denote this moral insensitiveness.... If it be asked by whom they were hardened or blinded, 11:8 makes the answer plain. Not for the first time in this epistle (1:21; 9:17-8) such moral insensitiveness is divinely inflicted" (Bruce 215).

And to my way of thinking, it was inflicted for the good of the church, not because of the bad of the inflicted, nor necessarily for the bad of the inflicted. After all, God's sovereign plan had earlier inflicted such blindness on most peoples, namely the Gentiles, and neither because they were bad, nor to their bad.

We might feel unhappy if we assume that blindness from the Israel plan, spelt ultimate damnation, but does it? Is Orpah ultimately damned (in hell) because she obeyed Naomi? Is Ruth ultimately saved (in heaven) because she disobeyed Naomi? (*Ruth* 1:11,14) Did Naomi preach bad news, a dysangelion? Was ultimate salvation/damnation ever exclusive to Sinai?

Or, let us ask, was the good news, the euangelion, ever meant for ethnic-Gentiles? It is worth asking, since even the twelve apostles had taken years, a resurrection, and then about ten more years, to answer that question. Actually, suffering perhaps a blindness not inflicted by God, Judas of Kerioth had fallen off-grid before the resurrection, reducing the twelve to eleven until his replacement.

Yes, the Twelve remained blind for a decade after the resurrection. A prime minister, Simon Peter, still didn't think that the Gentiles needed evangelism, and a racial divide seemed wise. Peter needed to be struck by a vision to be inflicted by sight (Ac.10:15). By the way, to understand that vision it helps to understand that symbolically ethnic-Gentiles had been likened to unkosher pigs, ironically as some have rashly dubbed ethnic-Jews ever since!

Within rhetorical abuse, Chrysostom called Judaic-Jews *pigs* (spiritually Gentiles), while not racially hostile to ethnic-Jews as such, and even called ethnic-Gentiles *Jews* if they sided with the *religion* called Judaism, which in those days was a strong option to sheep-straying Christians. Many ethno-Gentile Christians were adopting Sinai practices and festivals (Wilken xv), buying in to what Stan Telchin, as an ethno-Jewish Christian, rejected as being anti-Christian, namely *Messianic Judaism*. Chrysostom bad-mouthing them, and ironically Telchin bad-mouthing them and Chrysostom. Anyway, God had fallen out with his former people of Israel, tearing down their temple's curtain. And Rome had fallen out with its subjugate people of Judah, tearing down their temple. Although in Chrysostom's days ethnic-Jews flourished as full citizens of the Empire, persecuted by neither pagan nor Christian emperors, were the early signs of the new road not clear at a spiritual level?

Blind, *Messianic Judaists* clung on to Sinai, as if messiah were simply the icing on Sinai's cake. But it seemed to Chrysostom that going back to Sinai then, was akin to going back to Egypt before. Chrysostom's was the religious hatred of a shepherd towards wolves endangering their flock. He feared religious mutilation, an unholy haunting of the Christian flock by the ghost of Sinai.

He was not the only one to fear the lookalike Sinai pascha to what we sometimes call the passion, or *Pascha*, or *Easter*. Did Christian celebrations need to look different to Judaic ones to avoid creep-back? To add difference, he insisted that Pascha must never be celebrated on the same day as the Sinaitic Passover Week's meal (Nisan 15)—the safety of difference. Let some cite the branch-to-

root theme (Rm.11:17), fine, but hadn't the temporary splendour of Moses died, and the permanent splendour of Yeshua arisen (2 Cor.3:10)? Spiritually was not Sinai-Jerusalem but a Hagar-Jerusalem (Gal.4:24-5)? Dead-branch celebrations were dead.

Both religions slagged each other off in colourful terms, but slingers could be friends. Under a very different spirit and with the devil in his wit, Adolf Hitler spoke of "the moral mildew of the chosen race" (39). But No Mr. Hitler, people is people: his was *racial* hate, and Nazism was his religion.

### Relative damnation; relative salvation

Nowadays I can see that the global Israel plan was embryonic within Sinai-Israel and protected from the ethnic-Gentile world until birth. I can see it, that is, if I see that the ethnic-Gentile side was not thereby damned ultimately—blind on Earth, not lost in Hell. God's plan fits his nature. Damning ultimately the Gentile peoples in general *before* the cross, and subsequently the ethno-Jewish people in general *after* the cross, isn't his nature. Similarly, I can see that the global-Israel plan was protected from the ethnic-Israel side after it was birthed, if I see that the ethnic-Israel side was not thereby damned ultimately. Sinai-Israel is not the mother. God is both the father of its conception and the mother of its birth. Sinai-Israel might dominate God's child—God won't.

But then such sight does seem to me to question what the Christian gospel offer of Rm.10:14, is for. This in turn asks whether it began with the cross, or whether though by the cross it predated it—time's a funny thing (Rv.17:8). If the Christian gospel offer was essential for *ultimate* salvation, as Evangelicals often assume, was it available and globally accessible *before* Sinai? If so, Sinai was not directly essential for it, though you might say that Sinai was directly essential for the cross and therefore indirectly essential for Christ's gospel. But at least *Christian* evangelism was clearly not essential within or before Sinai, and Sinai-Israel didn't evangelise.

If Sinai was not essential for *ultimate* salvation, was Sinai to its people a mortal-life adjunct, an excursus, and extra, and in which case is Christianity more so but likewise? "Out of [God's] fullness

we have all received grace in place of grace already given" (NIV: Jhn.1:16): Christian grace has replaced Sinai grace. So as with Sinai, is the Christian gospel offer doubtless a blessing, but a blessing prior to ultimate salvation, a steak on the plate while we wait?

If so, this could explain why there is a *partial* hardening by God of Ethnic-Israel now, and had been a *partial* hardening by God before, when a Ruth was included yet an Orpah was excluded. It would simply mean that by God's plan some were precluded from Sinai steak then, and some are precluded from Christian steak now. Christian evangelism has at best delivered a postcode offer: how could they hear if no evangelist spoke to them?

It might help at this stage to remember that there are types of salvation. What Paul remembered in Rm.10 was not ultimate salvation. For instance, v13 cites Jl.2:32, where the context was salvation as *escape* from Babylonian invaders. Those who heeded and were rescued were the temple-based Remnant, selected by Yahweh presumably on their openness to his warning (Jl.2).

But a predisposition to idolise Sinai made mass conversion by ethnic-Jews, dangerous. And they had dimmed their own eyes. In Paul's days, the *Circumcision Party* was no joke (Gal.1:9) and was widely represented. They would be drivers, not passengers. Was it perhaps by God's design that for a while under Emperor Caligula, ethnic-Jews had left the church in Rome? It does seem to me that the ethno-Gentile section, having been left alone, was none too eager to welcome ethno-Jewish Christians back: ecclesiological balance was an issue Paul addressed in *Romans*.

Having himself been among the hardened, Paul's term was *partial* hardening (11:25), in which we can see that the Israel plan had turned a corner and moved on, leaving the blind to continue in their old and insular direction, becoming ever more unwilling to turn and be saved by messiah. Ethno-Jewish Christians needed to avoid sidelining the new covenant along Sinai lines.

Messiah himself was of Israel, was Israel, and is Israel to the church, his covenant people. I have read several books written by ethnic-Jews who became Christians—such as Arthur Katz, Stan

Telchin, and Richard Wurmbrand—folk who converted from Atheism or Judaism. Another, Raphael Gasson, who converted from Christian Spiritualism, had had little trust in the Bible until seeing its witness to Jesus. Even King Herod the Great had looked to the Bible to find Jesus, though not to worship him! Gasson noted how his ethnic people found Is.53 especially awkward (Hakes 2020:16-7), and had much blindness towards messiah.

### *The Great Covenant*

God has only one Covenant-Israel. My early Christian discipleship days were in dispensationalist circles—in Australia and in England. But I nowadays reckon ethnic-Jews covenantally to be no higher and no lower than any other race or nation since the cross. I believe that peoples and persons are all on a level playing field created by messiah's death, a death which transmuted the ethnic stage into the panethnic stage, and the old road into a new road for a new transethnic people. I am neither anti-semitic nor pro-semitic. I am pro-people, though I detest some people. And the question as to whether any signs of messiah's return will be literally based on ethnic-Jerusalem, is to my mind incidental.

### *Ethnic-Israel is no longer Covenant-Israel*

Paul affirmed a deep love for his ethnic people. Indeed he would have abandoned his Christian joy if that would have transferred it to them (Rm.10:3). But he knew that God's joy isn't an item which transfers, though it can be shared. Some actually reckon that if himself suffering ultimate hell<sup>10</sup> would grant his fellow countryfolk ultimate heaven, he was willing to pay that price.

But whatever Paul wished, the OT founding documents of the new covenant, reveals that Ethnic-Israel no longer holds title deeds to being God's covenant Israel. And indeed, its people were never 'saved' in the relative Christian sense (Rm.10:1), unless like Paul

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<sup>10</sup> For simplicity I'll not differentiate between the term *hell*, and biblical terms such as *sheol*, *hadēs*, *gehenna*, *Fire Lake*, etc. And I suggest that we can experience levels of hell (or heaven) on Earth.

receiving the resurrected christ. And even when they had held such title deeds, according to Jesus even some religious pharisees were neither children of God nor children of Abraham, for they were children of the devil in disposition (Jhn.8:39,42-4; Mt.16:23). And by the way, Judaism came from an enlightened Pharisaism which Paul as a Christian, was proud to belong to (Ac.23:6).

But Paul wasn't blind: "Not all who are descended from Israel are part of Israel" (CEB: Rm.9:6). That eases the question of who is part of "all Israel" in Rm.11:26. Paul scotched the idea of special ethnicity *apropos* Christ Jesus (Gal.3:28). He didn't scotch the idea that ethnic-Jews had historical advantages, and disadvantages: and God did not repent of having chosen them.

The writer to the Hebrews might likewise have painted from the minor to the major canvass, the ethnic to the spiritual, when he drew out from Jr.31, written in Israelite terms, that Israel's new covenant was the Christian covenant (Heb.8:10), redefining *Israel*. "It seems hard to avoid the conclusion that the author viewed the church as the true Israel of God in which the OT promises to Israel find their fulfilment" (Grudem 862).

Likewise John, an ethnic-Jew, made so bold as to reckon that some fellow nationals were not spiritually Jews, but spiritually of Satan's synagogue (Rv.2:9). His was theological realism, although painted in black and white terms to encourage the greys to take the right side. There is a strong case that now no ethnicity has a covenant with God, that no ethnicity receives as such his special favour or disfavour, and that people of all ethnicities can belong to Satan's synagogue, Satan's ecclesia, unless Christians.

We should not confuse race with religion. It is a category error when the term *Jew* is so misused as to claim by contrast that one cannot be a Christian and a Jew. Of course, one cannot be a Christian and a Judaic. An ethnic-Jew can choose Islam; an ethnic Iranian can choose Christianity; an ethnic Romanian can choose Judaism. In short, anyone of any ethnicity can be of any religion, an axiom beyond the bigoted blindness of the crowd who claim that Islamophobia (a phobia being an irrational fear, not hate) is racism.

To such bigots I ask, *Since Islam is a religion not a race, what race is being irrationally feared by Islamophobes?* On January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1933, Dietrich Bonhoeffer went on air to warn his fellow Germans not to idolise the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, who had just become their new *führer*. Was Bonhoeffer a bigoted Naziphobe? Soon democratic Hitler abolished democratic Germany. Not all fears are irrational, phobias. Good fears are good.

In semantic warfare, *phobia* is tagged onto words to make them sound delusional, dangerous, and diabolical. It is used to take down opposition. It turns *fear* into *hate*. It ideologically inverts moral valleys as if moral mountains. Political Correctivism is deceived and deceiving, a dislocation of human understanding by linguistic sabotage: “The words of this wizard stand on their heads.... Help means ruin, and saving mean slaying”, growled Gimli the dwarf (Tolkien 3.10.565). An ethnic-Jew can hate *Judaism*; an ethnic Iranian can hate *Islam*; an ethnic Romanian can hate *Christianity*. These are not crimes.

To some extent, Judaists who call their race both Yahweh’s suffering servant and promised messiah, have a point. But they are hopelessly out of date. Before hamashiach but no longer, Israel was indeed an anointed people with heaven’s anointed leadership and priesthood. One anointed prophet, Isaiah, prophesied Yeshua to be Israel to Israel. *Isaiah* has a section which holds what some call Servant Songs, partly because they focus on Yahweh’s servant. But in Isaiah’s vision, was Yahweh’s servant, Yeshua? After all, to some extent the ethnic nation of Israel could fit the bill, for Israel was called “my servant” in 41:8 and 49:3. But the devil is in the detail, detail which ultimately undermines ethnic identification. Might talk seemingly of a *race* bespeak a *person* within their people, one representing their peoplehood? Remember that Israel 1 means an individual (Isaac’s son Jacob), and Israel 2 means a people (Jacob’s sons-based people).

Certainly the details of the Isaianic mission fit Yeshua. Yeshua aside, was the whole, a righteous remnant or an outstanding individual, of Ethnic-Israel, ever sinless enough to bear sin (Is.53:11;

Ex.12:5)? And if so, turn in part or whole, the nation back to simply Yahweh (Is.49:5-6)? It is best to look to Jesus, who after an early ethno-Jewish phase, went global, leading out a righteous remnant into a new Canaan. Non-messianic ethnic-Jews are like the first wave of Israel which Moses led out of Egypt; messianic spiritual-Jews are like the second wave which Joshua led into Canaan after Moses died (Nb.1:2; 26:2). Jesus is no longer a Jew—for heaven unbinds from race—nor was he ever a Christian.

Isaiah's *Songs* show the Servant as separate from both a spiritually shoddy nation (42:18-25) and even "from the spiritually committed and expectant remnant (51:1-52:12), leaving a majestic Individual to occupy our gaze (52:13) as he died bearing the sins of others (53:4-9) and lives [again, now] administering the salvation he has won for them (53:10-2)" (Motyer 2005:27).

Sure, Jesus did not meet Ethnic-Israel's *nonspiritual* expectations, but then those expectations had never been God's. God used nonspiritual ethnic terms to prophesy a spiritual transethnic age. *They* pictured a better caterpillar; *God* pictured a new butterfly. Such transformation confused people then and still does. Back then, even John the Baptist had seen the disconnect and had questioned messiah (Mt.11:3). Yet he whom the people had tried to make their national king (Jhn.6:15), was he whose spiritual kingdom was not of this world (Jhn.18:36). He was spiritual Israel unto national Israel—and beyond.

The fourth Song speaks of the Servant being lifted up, exalted. The Greek OT used the same word as Jesus did of himself in such as Jhn.8:28 and 12:32,34. Some Bibles commendably note that the term for 'lifted up' (*hupsō*) can carry the idea of exaltation. He was exalted on the cross, but kingly exaltation is probably a Davidic subplot in *John*, as in Jhn.7:39.

Do we *lift up Jesus*? It saddens me when we join the ancient song of the Roman soldiers, and "lift Jesus higher", not the least if he is only for men, as one 'lift' song says. Good heavens, Rome even did a *Lift Jesus Higher* rally, in 2024! Singing biblical terms in unbiblical ways can cause confusion and blindness, but some

songwriters have dumped us there. It is safer for songs to replace the term ‘lift up’, with something like ‘exalt’, simply to add some verbal distance between what we mean and what Jesus meant when he spoke of being lifted up onto a cross to redeem us. In his sense, we cannot lift up he who was lifted up once for all time, even if colourful Christian panpipers offer to lead Hamelin’s spellbound children to goodness knows where.

I’d add that Jhn.12:32 does not affirm Universalism, that idea that God’s love is invincible—it isn’t—and that every human being ever conceived and every angel ever created, will ultimately live lovingly with him. John Sanders’ *No Other Name* (1994) is good on Universalism. Here be monsters, but the NKJV sails happily past Scylla, the monster of Parochialism, without being sucked into Charybdis, the whirlpool of Universalism: “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself.”

I used to think that for his part, as a magnet attracts magnetic items, so Christ would attract every human being: any repelled would be so by their own polar choice (Lk.13:34). Now I see that he had simply prophesied globalism, an offer to the world, for he is for all peoples, all ethnicities. In the Servant Songs we thus find the term *Israel* as distinct from the historical Jacob, and also from the historical ethnic race that has had good claim to that honour. This servant-Israel would be lifted up to redeem. This has a number of levels to it, not least at the level of Yeshua.

### *Yeshua and true exodus*

When Mark cited Is.40:3 (Mk.1:3), he spoke of the way (*hodos*)—from which we get ex-odus—of Yahweh. John, Yahweh’s prophet, was to prepare Yahweh’s way for messiah. In fact, neither Is.40:3 nor Mk.1:3 speak of THE lord. They both say “the way of Lord”. *Kurion* was the Greek way of putting Yahweh *as a name*. Mark was not calling Jesus *lord* in this text, but he was hinting at an exodus.

When we compare Jesus to the ethnic exodus, we meet an interesting link to the number 40, in that as Ethnic-Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness, Jesus-Israel spent 40 days in the wilderness being tested. Was there some symbolism suggesting

that in Jesus we have our spiritual exodus and a leader other than Moses? But for now let's look at the Hoseanic link to the exodus.

In Hos.11:1, Yahweh spoke of Israel as his child rescued out from Egypt, who travelled to Sinai (covenant) and ultimately into Canaan. Admittedly *Hosea* sounds strange to us—if indeed we take the time to read it. It was, like some parables, a confusing prophecy to a confused people. Word plays reversed meanings: for instance, after some undefined transformation, we read that the *scattered* son would become *sown* (Jezreel); the *unloved* daughter would become *loved* (Lo-ruhamah); the *bastard* son would become Yahweh's *son* (Lo-ammi). *Hosea* pictures Yahweh's ancient people as a stubborn cow (4:16), as uneatable as a half-baked cake (7:8), and as a baby too silly to be born (13:13).

And *Hosea* mixed its analogies, mentioning Israel just over 40 times, and sometimes distinguishing between South Israel (Judah) and North Israel (Israel). And besides speaking of the former United Israel, and Gomer-Israel as a wonky woman who became a wayward wife, it speaks of her children—Ephraim-Israel and Judah-Israel (eg 5:5,13). Ephraim in the north would soon be exiled, when prophecy hit the ground. And somewhere along the line, Yahweh would divorce Gomer-Israel (annulment) who would continue in evil, yet he would at some point marry Gomer-Israel. And somehow Israel was to get a root and branch makeover. Israel would be sown, loved, true-son. Does not Eph.2:14-6 unveil this a little more, divided humanity made whole in Jesus-Israel?

Yahweh showed great grace. The United Son (Israel) had been rescued and redeemed from Egypt, but had split up and gone to the dogs (Hos.11:1-2). The New Son would come out but would not go bad. “Matthew used Hos.11:1 in his narrative of Jesus’ infancy (2:15), because he found much in that text that reinforced his understanding of the messianic office: (1) it was revealed in a context of conflict in which Egypt played a key role; (2) it contained a divine call to purposeful service as did God’s call to Israel; (3) it featured a unique relation of sonship between God and his anointed one; (4) it intimated the grace by which the father nurtured both Israel and the infant Jesus; (5) it recapitulated the exodus and in so doing made the

Christ-child the new/true Israel; and (6) since Moses was involved in the first call from Egypt (see Hos.12:13), Jesus was spotlighted as the greater Moses. The relationship of OT prophecy to NT fulfilment is like that of seed to flower. What was potential in the seed became actual in the flower; themes latent in the OT are bountifully disclosed in the NT.” (Hubbard 189-90)

Hosea used a husband-wife analogy to underline the themes of wifely loyalty (in which Israel 2 failed, underlining the annulment motif), and fruitfulness in a covenant sense. Although Jesus was not pictured as Yahweh’s *wife*, but presented predominantly as his *son*, this does not undermine that he could be described under Hosea’s father-son analogy. Yahweh’s son was Israel. Israel 2 had been literally brought out from Egypt. Israel 3 had been literally brought out from Egypt, but spoke of his departure, his exodus, as being through the cross of his death, not the crib of his birth. And the wifely themes of loyalty and fruitfulness are not absent, although the wifely theme is absent. As Ethnic-Israel had been Yahweh’s son, so Jesus was God’s true son, his true Israel (Hos.1:2), loyal and fruitful.

According to Hosea, Israel would be sown, loved, true-son. I like the idea that the reversal of the children’s name from negative to positive, had an initial stage for Ethnic-Israel (via King Cyrus), yet lacked certain elements, such as the royal leader (Hos.3:5). Did Hosea only see a first next-stage for his people? Yet does it also apply to Adam in whom all die, whose name the true Adam—in whom we live—has reversed (1 Cor.15:22,45)?

A second stage—did Hosea see it?—was Jesus, himself Israel’s royal leader, a feature absent after the exile. “Small wonder, then, as a second stage, that devout women and men found in the birth of Jesus as the messiah the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Lk.1:55), to David (Lk.1:32-3) and to the people through the prophets (Mt.1:23; 2:6). The only specific citation from *Hosea* in the infancy-narratives suggests that Matthew (2:15) saw in Jesus a new Israel rescued from a new Pharaoh (Herod) by a new exodus (Hos.11:1), and thus he used for his argument a passage which in *Hosea* was not a prediction but a divine reflection on Israel’s past” (Hubbard 70).

I like too the idea that “the formation of the church was the third stage. Here the NT snatched the word-plays on the names of the last two children and applied them to the incorporation of Gentiles into the covenant as the new people of God (Rm.9:25-6; 1 Pt.2:10). The removal of the ‘nots’ was seen by Peter and Paul, not as the restoration of [ethnic] Jews to a renewed covenant relationship, but as descriptive of [ethnic] Gentiles who had previously received no mercy nor had been included in the people of God. In this way prophecies that in their first setting had been directed to Israel were rechannelled to describe the life of the Christian church and especially its Gentile expression. In the movement of biblical prophecy the OT not only stretched forward to the NT, but the NT also reached back and claimed from the OT those passages which suit its theological understanding of what God had accomplished” (Hubbard 71). On what Hubbard called the third stage, more anon.

### *Yeshua and true covenant*

Let’s jump from Hosea’s mention of kingship (Hos.3:5), to Nathanael’s revelation that Jesus was God’s messianic son, Israel’s king (Jhn.1:49,51). In fact he both represented God’s Israel plan, and was the new Israel-people’s king, their land, and their temple. In several ways he fulfilled God’s Israel plan as Israel.

Responding to Nathanael, a true Israelite, Jesus referred back to Jacob, Israel 1 who had kicked off Israel 2. At one point Jacob had dreamt of an earthly access point to heaven (Gen.28:12-3). I guess that though unseen as such, the symbolic ladder remained when Yahweh’s inheritor-people (Israel 2) dwelt in the land within his covenant. It was a permanent upline while that covenant lasted. For if the ladder did not abide, why on earth was the dream given if it wasn’t there when they got there, or flit willy-nilly while they were there? It was a spiritual connection for both Jacob (Israel 1) and Ethnic-Israel (Israel 2). The literal land on which the ladder stood would be literal land given to Jacob’s children. I suspect that it became manifest with the *tabernacle* and *temple*.

There is also significance in this section following John’s point that by becoming Jesus, God’s son the Logos had pitched his tent, his

*tabernacle*, on Earth (Jhn.1:14). He would draw all peoples to himself (NKJV: 12:32). He is the light, the true *temple* (Jhn.2:19).

Significantly John's Gospel, which highlights the *alēthinos* term, records Jesus' reference to Jacob's Ladder, especially in the opening section of the Gospel, inviting us to look for indications of this Ladder. Nathanael—a true son of Israel—and others (*you* is plural) would see the true staircase, the true heaven-touching-earth. The true ladder would connect heaven and earth, and signify the true messianic land. Does this extend to the idea that Eden was once where God's ladder lodged on Earth, and, that being messianic land, the church is now where God's ladder is? Does this extend to every individual Christian? Have we a Ladder connection?

I must add that when I speak of the true land and the true ladder, I do not mean a contrast to something that was false. Jacob—and I suspect later his inheritor-people—did not have a false ladder. For *true*, in the Johannine sense, such as in Jhn.1:9, didn't necessarily contrast true to false, nor real to counterfeit.

English Bible versions use the terms *real* or *true*, but the contrast is of what *anticipated* the *ultimate*, coming first in time, like shadows showing before the solid, hints before fulfilments. The hints, handy and meaningful in their days, were pale forerunners, such as Solomon's temple and its rebuild. As the race of Ethnic-Israel was the derivative of the anticipatory Yacob-Israel, so too the church is the derivative of the ultimate Yeshua-Israel.

Likewise with Heb.1:1-3, God's son is historically the highest spiritual self-disclosure of God to date, and the focus of the new covenant. I think that such ultimacy is one of the basic keys to unlocking the whole Bible, and that its significance can hardly be overplayed. The key goes under different terms. For example, Matthew preferred to speak of fulfilment, where an initial level of prophecy was subsequently fulfilled; the Writer to the Hebrews used a number of terms to contrast what we may call Alpha Level to Omega Level: *kreittōn* (better), *alēthinos* (ultimate), *typos* (paradigm), *hypodeigma* (copy), *skia* (shadow), and *parabolē* (symbolic). This too applies to the term, Israel.

On this, let's check out *God's son* as a title used by Nathanael. It's a term I've covered a lot more in my, *The Father's Gone Global*. As I've said, for Jesus it carried an Israel meaning. And let me repeat that sonship sometimes speaks of a non-biological relationship. That could mean maybe just a friendly relationship between a man and a boy or young man, or maybe a covenant relationship. In one sense, humanity as the First Adam is God's son/child (Lk.3:38). At a second level, Ethnic Israel was God's son/child (Hos.11:1): there is no prior mention of individuals, such as Abraham, or Jacob, being God's son in any way, shape, or form. At a third level, Yeshua was God's son/child (Mt.2:15). At a fourth level, the church is God's son/child, and Christians his children.

For the fourth level and fitting the fourfold pattern, texts about messiah-as-Israel are used for the church, such as it being Yahweh's servant enlightening the Gentiles (Ac.13:47), and being Israel, the people of God (1 Pt.2:10). We can focus on that later. The NT has no explicit text for the church being God's son/child, and that explicit definition stopped with Jesus, who uniquely is God's son both ontologically and functionally. The NT also differentiates between us being children of God, and Jesus as *the* child of God.<sup>11</sup>

But back to Nathanael. Jesus replied that calling him *God's son*, simply because of a simple miracle, was too simple, but that Nathanael saw someone who was in the pattern of Jacob-Israel, in fact, unknowingly saw the redefined Israel, not merely an ethnic king, *God's son* in a deeper sense. The Greek of Jhn.1:51 has a double *amēn*, using the Hebrew idea that immediate repetition was like the English superlative, as in the English injunction to "never let it rest until the good is better and the better is best."

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<sup>11</sup> Some songs assert that each singer is God's child/son, or that we are children of God's son. Songs are sung-sermons, but bad sermons mislead. Jesus called his non-Christian disciples his *children*, but in like manner John and Paul called their Christian disciples their *children*—it was a cultural, rabbinic thing. When Christ's disciples were born anew, they became his *siblings*, his *father's* children.

Of point of interest, the synoptic writers, ie Matthew, Mark, and Luke, cited Jesus simply as commonly saying *amēn* in the singular (eg Mt.10:23, Mk.8:12, and Lk.4:24). Probably Jesus had a signature way of using a double *amēn*, which unlike the synoptics John (25x) wished to record. The old KJV has *verily, verily*. I still recall frequently singing a C19 song by James McGranahan, *Verily, verily, I say unto you / Verily, verily, message ever new! / He that believeth on the son—'tis true!—/ Now hath eternal life!* A verity is a truth. Remove what has become both archaism and sexism, and truly you still have a strong gospel truth that eternal life is now (Jhn.6:47). John wished both to record Jesus' double *amēn* style, and record Jesus' repetition-for-emphasis. Most English versions update John's wording to something like *truly, truly, or most truly*. Nathanael, as sincere Israel, not deceptive Jacob, would see heaven open and angels of God ascending and descending on the 'son of man'. As intended, this last term was puzzling (Jhn.12:34).<sup>12</sup>

Nathanael would see heaven opened. Some have focused too much on the idea that heaven being opened is a pattern for Christians. Let me touch on that one here and now. Factoring in Mt.3:16—when the Baptist had earlier seen heaven opened after Jesus was water-baptised—some say ① that Jesus didn't perform miracles until after his baptism; ② that his baptism was the point of full submission; ③ that therefore, we need to arrive at full submission in order to work miracles; and ④ that even as heaven opened to Jesus, so it will for us.

In my opinion that idea ① likens Jesus' boyhood to imperfect submission; ② fails to see that Jesus' miracles began sometime after his baptism; ③ puts too much weight on water-baptism as symbolising submission; and ④ does not put enough weight on

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<sup>12</sup> By the way, when it comes to translation, while perhaps the son-of-man phrase can be improved, I don't really think that the CEB's 'human one', helps anybody. My guess is that the CEB too eagerly wished to avoid sexism, though for my money 'man/mankind' as a species term is just that, species-specific, not gender-specific.

Eph.2:18 which speaks of the ‘open heaven’ for all Christians. Immersion marked a new phase linked to John’s mission, not the point of submission. Jesus’ miracles began afterwards, because only then did his mission require them.

Getting back to Nathanael, “an ‘open heaven’ was every Jewish apocalyptic’s dream” because it meant seeing revelations, not seeing answers to prayer (Kostenberger 85; Ac.10:11; Rv.4:1; 19:11). For Nathanael, heaven would be seen to open and remain open—the Greek of *anoigō* (open) is in the perfect tense. And by the cross of Christ, is this not what we see, the true land of Israel, God’s true community wherein messiah lives?

Much speculative Jewish apocalyptic had been based on the idea that some interesting characters had gone into heaven and come back with revelation. Jesus was clear on this: “no one has ever gone to heaven and returned. But the son of man has come down from heaven” (NLT: Jhn.3:13). The true ladder for the true Israel.

What God had up and running before the Yeshuic Covenant, was neither false, permanent, nor unhelpful. It was an initial (alpha) level of what would be the ultimate (omega) level for mortal man and what would transcend the artificial barrier of ethnicity. Jesus had called Nathanael a true Israelite, in the sense of sincerity, even though a descendant of crafty Jacob-Israel. Then Jesus reminded Nathanael about Jacob’s open heaven dream, of angels using a stairway between heaven and earth.

This poetic vision shows both human need and divine response, focused at the alpha level through Jacob. Gen.28:12-22 highlighted the Abrahamic Covenant which would bless Jacob and, through Jacob, all peoples. Jacob personally committed to it, beginning Israel’s practice of a regular tribute tithe to suzerain Yahweh from vassal Israel. (The true Jacob gave himself fully, and Israel 4 moved beyond tithing.) Nathanael’s vision would connect to this collection of ideas. Later, Jesus would say to a Samaritan woman that he himself was indeed greater than Jacob (Jhn.4:12-4), one offering greater blessing as a greater well to quench spiritual thirst.

\*

**Veni, Veni, Emmanuel** (not ©)

You came . God's loving . wisdom from on high  
with him you . did make . earth and . sea and sky  
creating man . from just dust and . clay  
now you have . made a new . and living way.

*We now rejoice, our lord Emmanuel you came to save your heavenly Israel.*

You came . in truth to . save us adon-ai  
who to the . tribes on . height of . stark Sin-ai  
in ancient times . gave Mo-ses your law  
in cloud and . majesty . and holy awe.

*We now rejoice, our lord Emmanuel you came to save your heavenly Israel.*

You came . of ancient . royal line to free  
the slaves from . Satan's . pitch black . tyranny  
from depth of hell . lost peo-ple to save  
and give them . vic-tory . beyond the grave.

*We now rejoice, our lord Emmanuel you came to save your heavenly Israel.*

You came . to give us . all a royal throne  
to open . up your . heavens . for our home  
to make the way . that has set us free  
and close the . path to death's . dark misery.

*We now rejoice, our lord Emmanuel you came to save your heavenly Israel.*

You came . as radiance . to replace our night  
and cheered us . by the . bright dawn . of your light  
dispersed the gloom . and clouds of our night  
our futile . shadows you . have put to flight.

*We now rejoice, our lord Emmanuel you came to save your heavenly Israel.*

You came . O glorious . prince of peace in you  
man's hopes of . peace were . by death . born anew  
and we who have . bowed down to your call  
are better . than we were . before the Fall.

*We now rejoice, our lord Emmanuel you came to save your heavenly Israel.*

You came . you came . our . lord Emmanu-el  
to ransom . once bound . captive Israel  
that mourned alone . in dark exile here  
until to . set us free . you did appear.

*We now rejoice, our lord Emmanuel Oh come oh come to save your Israel.*

### True Israel

- Israel 1 Jacob-Israel—Jacob the man
- Israel 2 Ethnic-Israel—Jacob's twelve sons and descendants
- Israel 3 Jesus-Israel—born within that special identity
- Israel 4 Global-Israel—the church, born by the spirit of Jesus

“This is what the lord told us to do, saying: ‘I have made you a light for the nations; you will show people all over the world the way to be saved” (NCV: Ac.13:47).

“Paul...implied that the true children of Abraham, those who are in the most true sense ‘Israel’, are not the nation of Israel by physical descent from Abraham, but those who have believed in Christ...the ‘my people’ of Hos.2:23” (Grudem 861): Rm.4:11-18; Gal.3:29; Php.3:3.

Grudem denied that old classical dispensational sharp divide of Lewis Chafer, and noted that according to progressive dispensationalism—that is, the idea that Israel-prophecies can apply to church now and Ethnic-Israel to come—spiritually there is now in messiah only one congregation (Eph.2:14-20) who are equally co-heirs (3:6), both of ethnic-Jews and of ethnic goyim. Indeed “almost all of the titles used of God’s people in the OT are in one place or other applied to the church in the NT” (Grudem 862).

Among several questions Grudem flagged up, is whether 1 Pt.1:1 and Jas.1:1 were written to Ethnic-Israelites as such, or to ethnic-Gentiles under code words for Israel, the *mystērion*. Opting for the latter, in particular he noted that 1 Pt.2:4-10 is chock full of Israel-themes, such as God’s place (relocated from ethno-Jerusalem to spirito-Jerusalem: 5), God’s priesthood (relocated from Sinai-priesthood to Christo-priesthood: 4-5,9), and God’s people (relocated from ethno-Abraham to holy nation as chosen church: 9-10)—Christians!

But we can ask both right and wrong questions. As a right question, if Jesus was/is true Israel, who were his sons? As a wrong question, if Jesus was/is true Israel, who were his four wives?! But at the end of the day, analogies are approximates, partial patterns. Here the analogy needn’t be pressed for mothers of sons, let alone

asking if eleven betrayed one and all ended up in Egypt, as in Joseph and his brothers. In fact, among his twelve apostles, one betrayed the eleven who ended up in Canaan. But Judas was no Joseph, and Christians aren't divided into twelve denominations.

But at least in asking who were his sons, we ask a question that introduces the idea that if Yeshua himself defined the Servant Songs' idea of *Israel* serving *Israel*, Jesus' circle of twelve apostles intentionally represented the true *twelve* tribes of Israel.

We read that his twelve apostles were a little flock (Lk.12:32). Did that imply that as Ethnic-Israel had been a seemingly insignificant flock, so his apostles were a flock within that flock, a hidden Israel? After all, they were seemingly insignificant among Ethnic-Israel, even as Ethnic-Israel had once been insignificant among the nations (Dt.7:7). They too were despised and acquainted with grief.

Within the OT talk of sheep and flocks, Ezekiel had prophesied a Good Shepherd. Sure, ultimately that was Yahweh himself, but in some sense it was also someone else who would remind them of King David (Ezk.34:15,23-4). Ethnic-Israel had been Yahweh's vine (Ps.80:8-19; Is.5:1-7; Jr.2:21; Ezk.15; Hos.10:1-2). Prophetic imagery: Jesus was God's *alēthinos* vine, his disciples branches (Jhn.15:1,5).

It gets even better. The father helps fruitful Christians to be more fruitful—his individual care. Of course, on the flip side unfruitful branches—any Christians ignoring discipleship/lordship—are as useless to God as vine branches that are cut off (6), and in viticulture are simply burnt. But fear not, unproductive Christians aren't consigned to hell—nor should heretics be burnt, contrary to some medieval teaching.

At this point Jesus had in mind Ezk.15:1-8, where the vine pictured Ethnic-Israel. So in warning of Christian dangers, he was “reinforcing the replacement motif” with which Jhn.15 began (Carson 1991:517).<sup>13</sup> As Christians we have the sovereignty to be

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<sup>13</sup> But some Christians prefer an *extension motif*, *Christianity as a branch of Ethnic-Israel*. Generally they would agree that Sinaism is

unproductive as Christians, and God has the sovereignty not to waste his time on us, and to ditch us as disciples, not as children. Jesus' disciples, in their next stage as Christians, would be extensions of him who is the true/alēthinos vine. By the way, commenting on Jhn.15:6 being a proof text for hell's burning, Hans Küng commented that "it is impossible to imagine a more flagrant abuse of the Gospels, and of this Gospel in particular" (257). Calvinism tends to assume that it means simply the separation of pseudo-Christians (eg Köstenberger 455), but there's no need to wriggle out of its plain meaning.

The core group of twelve symbolised a new Davidide monarchy (Mt.19:28), superior to the old regime. We can see many clues to the NT church's identity once the key opens the lock. Let's look.

### **True Pentecost**

Twelve is Big, and who bothers with a 13x table? Twenty-five times the Gospels call Jesus' inner core followers, 'The Twelve' (some later manuscripts throw in Lk.22:14, too), and Mt.10:1-2 defines them as disciples (some later manuscripts add this definition to Mt.20:17/Lk.9:1). Here I prefer the CEB/NABRE/NIV. Let's bear in mind that Jesus had many disciples, chose twelve to a higher level and function, and that apostleship was never limited to them. But Twelve is Big.

The Twelve (*dōdeka*: Mt.26:14; Mk.4:10; Ac.6:2) was the usual form of address, the common jargon for them, and that number was symbolic. For contrast, while three in particular were closer to events, they were never called The Three. No, the smallest inner circle was twelve by design. Indeed for John, a man who seems to have methodically planned to write into his Gospel so much symbolic significance, The Twelve would only be called such after

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ended, and the ethnic people as missionally pointless, yet hold that a promise-is-a-promise suggests that a final generation will receive some special *salvation*. But if that fulfils a promise, does it mean that since Christ, most or all of Ethnic-Israel have been *damned*, and only all of Generation Omega to be the lucky few? Delayed favouritism?

the story of the Jewish feeding, when knowing Yeshua's dormant royal inheritance, the crowd threatened to make him their king.

Jhn.6:1-15 records this miraculous sign as a significant link with the synoptics—they seldom connect before the cross. It speaks of a new Passover: “the movement from the miracle to the discourse, from Moses to Jesus (6:32-5; see 1:17), and, above all, from bread to flesh, is almost unintelligible unless the reference in 6:4 to the Passover picks up 1:29,36, anticipates 19:36 (Ex.12:46; Nb.9:12), and governs the whole narrative” (Hoskyns 281).<sup>14</sup>

What was so significant about the feeding of the oft-called 5,000? Comparing the locations and cultural words used, “from the time of [C4] Hilary of Poitiers it has been common to argue that the feeding of the [5,000] represents [God's] provision for the Jews, and...the [4,000 as] for the Gentiles” (Carson 1991:271). Not all miracles were for ethnic-Jews: the bread would go global, as the Syrophoenician woman prophesied.

But initially the bread was to satisfy an ethnic-Jewish audience, which had about 5,000 men (Mt.14:21)—Jesus multiplied a young teenage boy's budget picnic: the one would give life to the many. The *twelve* basketfuls remaining symbolised messianic manna still available for each of the *twelve* tribes of Israel in their exodus.

Would King 'Joshua' lead them in battle for the Promised Land? Was he not their prophet, their king, the Moses long expected, who would free them from Rome? Such thinking was confused, and their hearts pinned on the wrong hopes. In line with what he later said to Pilate about his kingdom, he wouldn't be their ethnic war-lord. He fled to the Golan Heights, lest they began a war of independence and be slaughtered as witless sheep.

As to what he was, “he came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him” (NABRE: Jhn.1:11), by and large. John only spoke of The Twelve (6:67, 70-1) here and in 20:24—even after Judas had

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<sup>14</sup> Ex.12:46—likewise Jesus' body was not broken, Jhn.19:36.

departed it wasn't The Eleven. They were drawn from Ethnic-Israel but stood separately.

### Judas replaced

"Let another take his office" (Ac.1:20). One apostle down, which invites numerous questions and answers. For instance, did God do bad things to a good man? Here I suggest that even as Gomer had had the mindset to become traitorous, so Judas had had the mindset to become traitorous. Thus for a part requiring a traitor, he had been God's selection, not made traitorous by God but used as a traitor by God, with zero impact as to whether he ultimately will be heaven or hell based. But back to the theme, Twelve.

The Keriothite had fallen in the plot and from the plot. Jesus had died. The Twelve were down to eleven for a few weeks, and Luke spoke of *The Eleven* (Lk.24:9,33; Ac.2:14). Why, instead of simply saying *apostles* in Lk.24:9, as he did in the next line, did Luke use this expression? Was it not to say that the core group, previously The Twelve, were unprepared for the grand opening?

To replenish their symbolic strength, Judas had to be replaced. In another sense even Jesus was replaced by the spirit (Jhn.16:7). God can be behind replacement. Though the spirit was already with them at some level, he would become their paraclete (*paraklētos*) and mediate Jesus' lordship on the ground, tactical command in Jesus' name. Luke's second volume picked up on this theme of replenishment, a restoration of symbolic strength to twelve, showing Matthias being added to the eleven (*endeka*) apostles (Ac.1:26) before Pentecost. Let's look at this.

From a pool of well over 500 believers (1 Cor.15:6), a significant number of 120 met in Jerusalem. They agreed that before the spirit began his new job, a twelfth apostle was needed, and Matthias fitted the bill. Wishing to keep the apostolic number to twelve and to include Paul, some claim that Peter and company were gun-jumpingly wrong, for after all after Pentecost Matthias disappeared from Luke's radar. He sure did, but so did Andrew, Matthew, Philip, and Thomas—no big deal.

I too used to drop Matthias in favour of Paul, thinking that Pentecost could have symbolised a new kind of Israel with only eleven apostles. Nowadays I see that Peter knew better, seeing the pattern of twelve-tribed *Israel* which they needed before going public on Day One, Pentecost, when their company was floated on the market, so to speak.

They shortlisted witnesses who had been discipled by Jesus—had walked with him proving commitment—before prayerfully voting (Ac:1:26). There have been many apostles since, who have never physically walked with Jesus—such as Paul and Barnabas—and who have never seen him before he died. Too easily I had believed that apostleship died out after The Twelve, replaced by apostolic authority only transmitted through canon, clergy, and creeds.

Luke reflected the sense that a twelfth apostle was required before Pentecost. A militant objection pits Paul against Peter. It says that Luke belonged to Paul's Party, not Peter's, and recorded Matthias as Peter's folly. Yet if so, I ask, why did Luke not either make it crystal clear that it was Peter's folly undermining Paul, or simply airbrush Matthias out of history?

Since it was Peter's belief, and he was arguably the leading apostle of the first wave, you might wonder why we wonder about Luke's opinion anyway. The answer must surely be that it seemed good to Luke, as a Gentile theologian and historian on Paul's team, to confirm Peter decades later, not simply theologically but with historical hindsight and acumen.

That *Petrine* theology argued the New Israel case before Pentecost, seems clear enough. Had Luke simply made up the idea of there being a replacement apostle before Pentecost, he would have made up some theological reason for Peter to say. And had the idea not been historically accurate, Luke's early readers in the know would have blown the gaffe. Peter saw the importance of the church presenting as New Israel, a New Base within Yahweh's will.

### Three Big Texts

#### Romans 11:26

##### Is Sinai valid?

To add in some historical context, ethno-Jewish Christians were returning to the church after Emperor Claudius had kicked out all ethno-Jews from Rome for some peace and quiet (about AD 49). Now some 5 years later, should Rome's church welcome them back? Not all Gentile Christians were overly happy to welcome ethno-Jewish Christians back: hadn't Claudius worked God's will by kicking out *all* ethnic-Jews (Rm.11:18)?

Paul admitted that God had a plan in generally cutting off that race as a race from the new religion. Paul added that he himself was among those still lovingly blessed as descended from Sinai, and was even deeper loved by messiah. So ethno-Jewish Christians remained in God's core will, in its root, and enriched the church.

Rm.11:28-9 doesn't say that Sinai's gifting had been revoked—but any mission it had had had been deactivated. And the husk having produced its wheat, mostly turned against the wheat. Was that by God's sovereign will? Paul made clear that God having loved ethno-Gentiles yet minimised them before the cross, still loved ethno-Jews yet minimised them after the cross.

Paul made clear by *ametamelētos* (Rm.11:29), that God did not in the least *regret* having called and gifted Ethnic-Israel (2 Cor.7:10). I like the NJB here: "there is no change of mind on God's part about the gifts he has made or of his choice". Many versions put *irrevocable*—not called back, but earlier English Bible versions preferred the term *repentance*. There is a difference between 'I have not changed my mind (*repented*) about having given' and 'I can't take back what I gave.'

God never regretted having used King Cyrus as a messiah but doesn't continue to use him (Is.45:1-8). God extended his gifts and calling, even throughout Ethnic-Israel's extended disloyalty. Even Judas of Kerioth had had gifts and calling: another took his place. Lk.20:10-7 speaks of new tenants, its final verse—Jesus as the

cornerstone—echoed in Ac.4:11, Eph.2:20, and 1 Pt.2:4-7. The Sinai chapter ended (Jhn.19:30); the messianic chapter began.

Paul's Sinai heritage included the adoption to people-sonship and, tied to that, the divine glory, the covenants, the torah, the temple worship, and the promises. His was the patriarchs, and from his people was traced the human ancestry of deity incarnate. As far as the gospel was concerned, Paul had been an enemy for the benefit of the Gentiles. As far as election was concerned, he had been loved (privileged) on account of the patriarchs (Rm.9:4-5; 11:28).

Yet Paul, an ethnic-Jew and Pharisee, counted these historic gifts and calling as loss compared to knowing messiah. As he put it, “we are the circumcision. We are the ones who serve by God's spirit and who boast in Christ Jesus. We don't put our confidence in rituals performed on the body...” (CEB: Php.3:3; Rm.2:29). If we—Christians of whatever race or races—are the true circumcision (linked to true call and gifting), then old Israel/Judah are not. In fact they never were, though physical circumcision and the physical temple had been prophetic signs of new covenant fulfilment, Israel 4.

So too Mt.5:17-20 affirmed Sinai's death. There, Yeshua quashed suspicions that he was anti-Sinai, affirming that its strength and authority came from God. Thus, it was more indestructible than the cosmos, and moreover was unendable *until* what it prophesied took over and offered a new level of righteousness than its parent.

*Plērō* did not mean *validate*. It meant that what Sinai “prophesied was in some sense taken up in and transcended by the fulfilment of the prophecy” (Carson 2010:369). Likewise authorised by God, John's baptism could not be ended *until* its fulfiller—in the sense of the one who showed its true meaning—came to redirect its heart but not its body. The husk, fulfilled (*plērō*) in the wheat, is discarded.

### Is God hard-hearted?

There was something Paul did *not* wish his audience *not* to know, something kept in former times under wraps, a *mystērion*. The secret Mk.4:11 had hinted at was circulating in Rome. Paul “did not state that what he was imparting was a new revelation or that it had been revealed only to himself; and it can be maintained not

unreasonably that the contents of this mystery are to be discerned in the OT seen in the light of the gospel events" (Cranfield 574). Is it about God hardening Ethnic-Israel?

Like dual election, deliberate hardening sounds nasty. If we work on the assumption that everlasting life with God is only possible through covenant revelation, then we must conclude that by and large God has previously damned the majority of humanity before the cross, and a specific minority-people since the cross. One can see why assuming this, like Augustine in trying to justify God's seeming hardheartedness (if God saw all, could do all, but didn't save all), Calvin suggested that the answer must lie in God sovereignly knowing that none deserved salvation, anyway, so we should be grateful that God saves even *some* diabolical sinners—let the rest of the bad bunch be damned as they definitely deserve.

Switching sides. Although the Greek terms vary between *sklerunō* (multiple *sclerosis* is about tissue *hardening*) in Rm.9:8, and *pōrō/ pōrōsis* in 11:7,25 respectively, I think the once shrouded plan which Paul brought to light, was that God himself—who had previously focused on Ethnic-Israel and so had spiritually hardened/blinded the Gentiles (ie by and large left them to their own devices)—now unhardened one side and hardened t'other.

As to why that should be, one might ask why ethno-Gentile peoples had been hardened before the cross. But let's first consider why ethnic-Israel was hardened by God after the cross.

Arguably a danger to undermine messianism from within had become baked into Ethnic-Israel, Paul being among those few ethnic-Jews who came into God's global plan and came out of ethnocentricity. As a Christian and an ethnic-Jew, Stan Telchin warned those who blindly backtracked from messiah to Moses, dragging the blind behind them into their pit.

After the late 1960's big swing to Yeshua as *ha mashiach*—such converts were sadly seldom backed by ethno-Gentile Christians—creeping disassociation and Judaizing tendencies kicked in. Alas, lamented Telchin, *Messianic Judaism is not Christianity!* For messiah had created "a single new humanity" (CJB: Eph.2:15),

dispensing with racial and Sinaitic tags (Telchin 150): Aaron out; Melchizedek in, so to speak (Heb.5:6).

Similarly as a Christian and an ethnic-Jew, Dr. Rich Robinson lamented his people's ethnocentrism ("veneration by a people of themselves and their traditions"), and that under a We-Are-One slogan, Yom Kippur had become more about them forgiving God, than about him forgiving them.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed "Is.6:9-10 is central for the early Christian understanding of why [ethnic] Israel as a whole did not accept Jesus" (Keener 380), and was also quoted in Jhn.12:40. Such hardening has nothing to do with unfair hardening to postmortem-life salvation (Level 4 salvation). In some situations, for God's overall plan to bless, he confirmed some in their inclination against him.

For example, he deliberately further antagonised the antagonism of Pharaoh against Moses. And by using *strengthen* as a synonym, Scripture shows that Pharaoh had made his own bed and it was Yahweh's will that Pharaoh should lie in it (Ex.4:21; 7:3). Ethnic-Israel had its own core unbelief (Rm.11:20), its own heart set to refuse the true Moses who came to it. For mission, Saul of Tarsus' heart was once hard towards Christians but soft towards Yahweh, who softened Saul's heart towards Christ.

The tendency to harden the hardened holds true to all of Ethnic-Israel. But where they are receptive (the quality, not the quantity of All Israel), if they get the chance through evangelism they are welcome to become Christians. They are invited, not barred. After all, for them to consider Christianity is *prima facie* evidence that they are

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<sup>15</sup> <https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/issues/issues-v04-n04/the-yom-kippur-dilemma>. His biblical quotes from the NIV, unsurprisingly, downgrade the scandal of God's name even from *LORD* to *Lord*, and there is polytheistic talk, yet he nicely presented a trilemma—should ethnic-Jews hold to an incohesive Judaism that lacks Sinai, hold to a Western pluralism that treats religions as merely subjective, or hold to Christianity as fulfilling the divine speech through messiah?

prepared to go against a deeply embedded and mutual anathema, and so not to play a negative role. Paul's blindness was removed—he had been unhardened (2 Cor.3:16). It is not to say that had he remained hardened, that ultimate hell was his fate.

### Inexclusivism

By *covenant revelation*, I include both Sinai (to which Naomi discouraged Ruth from entering), and Golgotha (to which Peter had not encouraged Gentiles to enter). By atonement—and this is where *inexclusivism* comes in—the cross both opened up everlasting life with God (Level 4), and opened up a here-and-now covenant closeness and comprehension of God (Level 3).

“...‘Anyone who calls on the lord will be saved.’ But before people can ask the lord for help, they must believe in him; and before they can believe in him, they must hear about him; and for them to hear about the lord, someone must tell them” (NCV: Rm.10:13-4). By that Paul meant salvation Level 3, eternal life now, steak on the plate.

Racial hardening doesn't make a scrap of difference to anyone of being ultimately saved into life beyond mortal death. It hadn't made a scrap of difference to pagans ultimately being saved into life beyond mortal death.

Yet confusing the salvation levels, the church soon developed an idea that Paul meant that only human point-of-decisions could receive personalised tickets to heaven—Level 4. Believing that, some postulate that anyone who hasn't had a chance to be born anew (*gennēthē anōthen*) is born again (*reincarnated*) until they hear the Evangel. And some with Augustine specifically deny any ticket to heaven being issued after death—*You live once and you die once with no reincarnate episode* (Larry Norman's *Forget Your Hexagram*).

As for 1 Pt.4:6, rejecting Clement of Alexandria, Augustine refused “to entertain the thought that the gospel was once preached, or is even to this hour being preached, in hell...as if a Church had been established there as well as on earth” (Sanders 55). He rightly dismissed it howbeit for the wrong reasons.

Wayne Grudem's *Systematic Theology* (Grudem 586-94) rejects the whole idea about Jesus having descended into hell.

- C<sub>4</sub> Rufinus of Aquileia tweaked the Apostles' Creed "was buried" into the more graphical "descended into hades", and later copyists thought that the creed had both expressions.
- The five primary proof-texts for *descensus* thinking—Ac.2:27; Rm.10:6-7; Eph.4:8-9; 1 Pt.3:18-20; 4:6—don't support that doctrine.<sup>16</sup>

Karen Jobes well argued that Jesus never went to hell/*hadēs*—*descensus*—but upon his death proclaimed his triumph to demon spirits, not preached to human ones (1 Pt.3:18-22). The key is to see that Peter's audience were in a catchment area well versed in the writings of *First Enoch* with its nephilim myths about Noah and the Dopey Watchers along with their evil spirit-offspring being imprisoned to this world. That's like nowadays a preacher encouraging a Tolkien fan club by saying that though Sauron oppresses them, eventually all Saurons will disappear into smoke. That said, if any individual doesn't get a chance to decide before death—and before the cross few heard even of Sinai—and if they won't get a chance to decide after death, it might seem rather hard on them. But is that hardness biblical? The C<sub>3</sub> Phoenician philosopher Porphyry, reckoned that the Bible was ridiculous if indeed it taught that everlasting life with deity had only been offered after the cross, and then only to those who heard of it and accepted it. And if I believed it taught what he believed it taught, I reckon I'd best join his camp, even as C S Lewis reckoned that if you sided with certain Anglican vicars, you'd best join Atheism.

Augustine's reply to Porphyry was pot. It was basically that since no human being deserved godly life either before or beyond the grave, God choosing to give it to even a limited few was a sheer grace which merited our unlimited thanks: be thankful even for small mercies! As for those not offered it, well, why weep for those

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<sup>16</sup> Connecting 1 Pt.3:19 with 1 Pt.4:6 is rather artificial. Contrasts include *kērussō*, to *euangelizomai*; *pneumata*, to *nekroi*; Christ having proclaimed, to Christ having been preached (see Jobes 271-2).

who thoroughly deserved their just fate? Neither Augustine nor Porphyry saw that God sees all human hearts, and will grant each their core desire, but that salvation now is but a rich blessing now.

### All Israel—existential or eschatological?

Anyway, let's leave it there for now as a background idea, and move to Paul's talk about 'all Israel' (*pas Israël*) being 'saved' (Rm.11:26). Ideas as to what he meant have included...

- that all ethnic-Jews will become Christians (Spiritual Jews) in the last generation (so Thomas Aquinas), and only Christians go to heaven. After all, isn't *all* all, and *Israel* Israel? Still, it's strange that in spite of God having neither favouritism nor disfavouritism (Rm.2:11), that *if* he has any obligation to this genetic line (which he has blinded?), that he should damn the vast majority of that line to an *everlasting* damnation, yet miraculously and irresistibly choose all those of its final iteration to *everlasting* bliss—if that is what salvation here, is about. Some suggest that postmortal evangelism will save all ethnic-Israelites—what, even Ahab?
- that *All Israel* is simply Global Israel, ie multiethnic salvation into Christianity (so C4/5 Theodoret of Cyrus?). In short, the mortal-life salvation of which Paul was speaking, would—as it was doing—come to *all* Christian-Israel, through Christ, as it had come to Paul. Does not Eph.3:4-6 speak of ethnic-Gentiles along with ethnic-Jews, forming one spiritual community, God's plan of All Israel?
- that all ethnic-Jews who become Christians over millennia form the group, *pas Israël* (so Louis Berkhof): a quality not a quantity. After all, did Paul not teach around his own experience of salvation-conversion, from mere ethnic to spiritual identity, and could *all* mean that all is all-generations-except-the-final, are *not* so saved? Actually, in rabbinic language the term *pas Israël* could exclude the unrighteous of that ethnicity. In light of Rm.9:6, had Paul used it in a then common way, to mean a section, a type, of ethnic-Jew, starting in the C1? Might *pas Israël* in Paul's

teaching have meant here the messiah-open of ethnic-Israel, which Paul exemplified?

For my part, I'd take the word *saved* in Rm.11:26 as *Christian* salvation. This fits within the reversal theme of both sight-to-blindness, and blindness-to-sight. It could then look like, whether simply in Paul's days, throughout the millennia, or simply for a final generation, ethnic-Jews in majority numbers are by God's design kept from *Christian* salvation if they constitute a danger to his multiethnic plan, and so are not defined as All Israel—a subsection of literally all Ethnic-Israel (*Israel* would literally mean even the lost Northern tribes, so cannot be literal). Even Paul was blinded—quite literally, revealing his inner blindness—until he was ripe to be a blessing, not a curse, to the global plan. He had a core openness to messiah.

But didn't Paul foresee an end-age event when the deliverer would come from heaven (Rm.11:26)? Firstly let us note that Paul probably melded ideas from Nb.24:17—"a star from (*ek*) Jacob...a man from (*ek*) Israel," into Is.59:20-1 + 27:9: in short, Paul placed himself in the tradition of the prophets. But his continuity with this prophetic tradition was in one important sense different: whereas the prophets of old longed for fulfilment of God's promises, Paul the 'sent' prophet proclaimed Scripture's fulfilment in Christ. Thus, Paul joined the prophets who have been sent out into the world, bearing the good news foretold in Is.52:7 and 61:1" (Soderlund and Wright 128).

Paul was primarily quoting Isaiah, who had spoken in future terms. But was what had been future to Isaiah, still future to *Paul*? One may quote what was to be, as if it is still to be, even though it has happened. For instance in Rm.9:33/1 Pt.2:6, "I am placing a stone", which had been future to Is.28:16, had happened before Paul quoted it. The stone *had been placed* and was the deliverer.<sup>17</sup> And the deliverer *had* come from earthly Zion (Rm.11:26)—though one day he will come from the heavenly Zion. Here, "if arguments

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<sup>17</sup> While I cringe at a lot of their songs, Keith & Kristyn Getty's *Oh, How Good It Is* (2012) is spot on when it says, "the redeemer has come".

are given [in support of the second coming], they are few and not very strong" (Reidar Hvalvik: *Journal for the Study of the NT*, 1990:38.92). When Zion refers in the NT to the heavenly Jerusalem, the context makes that clear (see Heb.12:22). Here Paul looked at what C H Dodd called *realised eschatology*.

By the way, have you ever been a bit confused about the terms, Zion and Sion? Some older versions translated the Greek *siōn* as Sion, thus confusing it with *sēōn* (Dt.4:48 = Mt. Hermon), the latter often put as Sirion (see Dt.3:9). *Sion/Sirion* is fine for only that one text. For all other texts, if following the Greek, *Sion* would sound fine, but if following the Hebrew (*tzion*), *Zion* sounds finer.

Steve Santini wished more use of Sion, arguing that Mt. Sion was a holy place, perhaps of Elijah's ascension. Barbara Aho wished less use of Sion, arguing that Mt. Sion was a place of sexual orgy between fallen angels and human women, a place of idols, and will be a place in Dan where the antichrist will reign.<sup>18</sup> Whatever the rights and wrongs of the mountain's holy or unholy past or future, for the NT I prefer Zion to Sion in English.

### Root and branch

Paul spoke of an Olive Tree. Some say that nowadays Ethnic-Israel, perhaps along with Sinai, is still the tree, and that ethno-Gentile Christians should evangelise ethno-Israel back into the tree, and see themselves as subservient to Sinai light and its 'true' people.

With Is.11:10 in mind, my take is that foundationally Paul's emphasis was on the Olive Tree *root* (*rhiza*—origins), God's core plan growing a history (a trunk, its development). Ethnic-Israel had never

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<sup>18</sup> In *First John*—it's nowhere elsewhere else in the Bible—*antichrist* is a term which John's audience had heard of (1 Jhn.2:18), but perhaps not one which John affirmed. John preferred to focus on the then present realities of antichrists (2:22; 4:3; 2 Jhn.1:7). I'm not saying here that there will not be a supreme enemy who is manifest in the last few years before Christ returns. Nor am I saying that the idea, antichrist, does not exist under other NT terms.

been trunk, merely branches flowing naturally (*physis*) from the main tree, but had relied more on itself than on the tree's root: a disconnect. Fallen Adam became the Wild Olive Tree. When Abraham became a new olive tree's root, the wild olive tree was relegated (common salvation), hardened, and the Gentiles were its branches. But at the messianic stage, some natural branches were cut off, and some foreign ones were grafted into the main plan, the cultivated olive tree.

As with hardening, I suggest that function rather than ultimate life, was the underlying issue. That in effect, the cry of newness, *tetelestai* (Jhn.19:30), ended the chapter on Sinai; that all its readers were no longer following the plot; that this may be pictured as a branch cut off from its tree, the tree itself alive by its root—we may say the root *idea* which has developed under the theme of Israel.

Let us call the tree, *Israel*. Let us recall that that name has had four segments all at various stages nurtured by the root and tapped into the growing tree. Namely, Israel the Jacob-man; Israel the Sinai-people; Israel the messiah-man; Israel the messianic-people.

Ethno-Israelites broken off from the evolving tree, disconnected from the root-plan, can be reconnected at the Christian level of the tree, tapping into the root, if they become Christians. And ethno-Gentiles, if they sin as did ethno-Israelites under Sinai, can be cut off from Christian life (Jhn.15:6). Paul, speaking to both sides, was explaining relationships and giving some warnings to Rome's church whose ethno-Gentile members mulled over the reconnection of ethno-Jewish Christians newly back from exile.

I drive down the road followed by a friend. Suddenly I take a left or right fork in the road, but my friend continues straight on. My friend has left me by not changing direction; I have left my friend by changing direction. Paul was a microcosm, an ethno-Jewish example of one who in solidarity with Sinai had been cut off from the root because their faith did not move with the root change. He was a branch cut off, but grafted back in. Most of his race held to the husk, rejecting its wheat. If I am on the right road and remain on it, if my friend is going to rejoin me they must head back to the

right road and meet me on it. *In this way*, Paul's way, All Israel—a type of Israel—will be saved.

### Galatians 6:16

#### *Reviewing the obvious?*

Here Paul applied the blunt in your face term *Israel*, to the church. Or did he? Would that fit with balanced theology? Some say that obviously Paul had only Ethnic-Israel in mind, partly because they say that in every other instance of the word Israel, the NT speaks of Ethnic-Israel, so for consistency obviously we must align Paul. That's a bit like David Hume, who argued that miracles did not happen, that he *a priori* believed they could not happen, and so any claimed inconsistencies to the obvious, were obviously to be explained away by procrustean means: nature was consistent, so obviously inconsistencies can't exist. Too many obviouslies are flung around like dust to blind us. 1 Pt.1:1 and Jas.1:1 are two such obvious texts. Let's look at them.

By the way, outside of *Acts* (11:26; 26:28), *1 Peter* alone has the word *Christian* (4:16). Peter, speaking to the diaspora (1:1)—the foreign residents—probably implied the twelve tribes. But he wasn't limited to ethnic-Jews: "What was agreed to [in Gal.2:7-9] was probably a simple difference in focus" (Moo 2013:236). Did he and Paul see that spiritually the *true diasporans* were the global church, foreigners to the world, and because of Christ sometimes even socially foreigners, cut off from citizenship rights and responsibilities (Jobes 61)? Probably, and he possibly addressed ethnic-Jews as well as former pagans (4:3): many ethnic-Jews lived the pagan dream.

James probably addressed ethnic-Jewish Christians (1:1), even though the term, *twelve tribes*, arguably in some contexts means God's people as the NT church, literally scattered (*diasporans*) and/or shunned around the Empire (Moo 1990:32-3). Christians could be diaspora *by persecution* (Ac.8:1; 11:19), and like Abraham had been, spiritually and socially *as foreigners* (Heb.11:9), in Canaan even if not yet in Canaan, as Abraham tasted Canaan in passing and would have it in permanence.

While we might prefer stricter terms, we must analyse what we are given and synthesise the data. For instance, that Paul called the church in Corinth *the church*, does not deny that term to assemblies of Christ outside of Corinth.

### Background and possibilities

So, Israel terms had wiggle room. And seeing that Paul could contrast a sinful-ethnic to a spiritual-global Israel (Rm.9:6; 1 Cor.10:18), let's ask if the duplications (real or fancied) of Gal.6:16, were based on a dual audience, namely the NT church *and* Ethnic-Israel. This verse—slightly simplifying its transliteration—is *kai hosoi tō kanoni toutō stoichēsousin eirēnē epi autous kai eleos kai epi ton Israēl tou Theou*. All will know one word; many will guess another. Unavoidably, prior commitments flavour translations. Here are two versions to contrast the grammatical poles.

- “Now may peace be on all those who live by this principle, and may mercy be on the Israel of God” (ISV).
- “May God’s peace and mercy be upon all who live by this principle; they are the new people of God” (NLT).

The ISV, seeing that a preposition and a conjunction (*epi* and *kai*) are used twice the same way, suggests two audiences. However, flexibly *kai* can mean ‘and’, ‘also’, ‘even’, and ‘yet’ (Balfour 39). So the second *kai* may read something like ‘*that is, on God’s Israel*’.

In the larger context of *Galatians*, “the issues focus on the question, ‘Who really are the children of Abraham?’ (See esp. 3:6-10,14,16,26-9; 4:21-31), [so] to conclude with a declaration that Gentile converts are rightfully the Israel of God would be highly significant and telling. In this case the second *kai* should be seen as being explicative, epexegetically (that is ‘namely’) clarifying in a second clause the expression *epi autous* (‘on those’): ‘even on the Israel of God’” (Longenecker 298). The *epi* would nicely fit this context, just as the NLT has it.

For its part the ISV could argue that *if* written to one audience as in 2 Jhn.3, Paul’s word order of attributes (*eirēnē/eleos*) should have been *eleos* before *eirēnē*, since mercy (*eleos*) comes before peace (*eirēnē*). However, the C1 Ethno-Jewish document, the *Shemoneh*

*Ezreh*, 19, has “Grant peace...and mercy unto us and unto all Israel.” Rm.5:1-11 likewise deals with peace, *before* 5:12-21 deals with mercy. The one-audience NLT isn’t nonsense.

The case against the NLT and for the ISV, is weak, and Paul’s context favours the NLT. He wished the so-called Circumcision Party (roughly Sinaitic Christians, later Ebionites) to cut itself off from the messianic community (Gal.5:12), for the sake of Christians and for the sake of the unevangelised. For spiritually the Circumcision Party was both uncircumcised and an evil spell (CEV: Gal.3:1) contaminating the true circumcision, Christians, even as the unkosher unmessianic yeast of the Pharisees—from whom came Judaism—could contaminate the holy message (Mt.16:11).

Speaking of the latter, I like the way the ISV puts Mt.16:2-3: “He replied to them, ‘You say, ‘Red sky at night, what a delight! Red sky in the morning, cloudy and storming.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, yet you can’t interpret the signs of the times?’ Some claim to see gnats, but are blind to camels under their very noses and miss Scripture’s messianic level.

The Circumcision Party, who argued about how folk stayed in Christianity, not about how folk got in, could boast the centrality of Jerusalem because of its ethno-Zionist temple, and they called Christians back to Sinai-slavery: in by the spirit, kept by torah. Perhaps they presented Sinai as the cure to ethical ills, whereas it was the spirit who was the cure (Gal.5:13,16) and Sinai now a curse. Unlike Peter, Paul raised the alarm, likening Sinaitic Jerusalem in some ways to Hagar the slave-wife—its followers were figuratively as Ishmael (Gal.4:24-5). We can see that though the joy of Ishmael came before the joy of Isaac, once Isaac had been born by a miracle, Abraham had to cut ties with Ishmael.

Sinai gave relative freedom only before the cross. Jesus backed the Baptist in bringing ethnic-Jews *back to Sinai* from paganism. But climbing up to Israel 2 from pagan life, does not justify climbing down to Israel 2 from Christian life. Going *back to Sinai* is retrograde, from daylight to dawnlight, from freedom to slavery.

As the cross raised freedom to a higher level (Gal.5:1), the once best became an enemy of the best. Sinai had been good freedom, even as Hagar had been bettered by marriage to Abraham yet remained a slave compared to Sarah. Hagar fell back into paganism, as had Sinai desacralised by the cross, once God fulfilled his promise to Abraham (Gen.17:8; Gal.3:16,29).<sup>19</sup> As St. Jerome once said, *Good, better, best, never let it rest 'til your good is better and your better best.* God makes the better best.

By the cross, messianic Israel began the true exodus, and many ethnic-Jews by not following the true Moses, spiritually returned to the slave ranks of Egypt. This slavery contrasted to the church, the spiritual Jerusalem (Gal.4:26), and was as enslaved Hagar to the freeborn Sarah, and as outcast Ishmael to beloved Isaac (28-9): both women were linked to Abraham. And speaking of whom, I was fair amazed to read on gotquestions.org that “despite the fact that this adulterous situation was of her own doing...”. That’s an amazingly inaccurate claim for a non-adulterous ethical pattern, which within Hittite culture was deemed honourable, marrying a servant into secondary wife status, as did Jacob, twice.

Paul was iconoclastic. Kosherness was invalidated (Gal.2:12); people became true children of Abraham through their faith in Christ (3:29); physical circumcision, a core value of Sinai, had

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<sup>19</sup> Some collective nouns carry singular and plural meaning, eg [sheep]. In taking [seed—Heb. *zera'*; Gk. *sperma*] to mean one, when its context was many, Paul used a then common rabbinic convention, asserting that God chose that word to conceal a hidden meaning (Gal.3:16), and elsewhere he happily drew out its obvious contextual meaning (Gal.3:29), as if both meanings were prophetically factored in in line with OT direction. The dual application is also seen in that fact that Christ is *the light of the world*, and we are *the light of the world*. Christ is Abraham’s seed; Christians are Abraham’s seed (spiritually). Literally Isaac was Abraham’s special seed (descendant), and through Isaac there was much seed, many seeds, descendants. Yet prophecies could carry hidden future and spiritual application. Jesus was also the seed of David (Jhn.7:42; Rm.1:3), God’s royalty to the world.

become valueless (5:6). Now after such anathemas to Christ-rejecting Jews, was Paul likely to pacify them, or expect them to be pacified by a BTW? Even if he had such optimism and tacked on to his ethnic people, “and mercy to the Israel of God”, would he not there and then have expanded a bit on that new thought?

Some simply accept the ISV because they reject Replacement Theology (replacementism/supersessionism). For instance, Jacob Prasch slated the wider and overlapping Covenant Theology, as being both anti-Israel and anti-Jewish (so Prasch 157). But the idea that wherever replacement theology has flourished, non-Christian Jews have had to run for cover, is risible. *Supersessionism* allows the criterion of justice (not blind-eye favour) to judge Middle East politics. *Pace* Prasch, it’s not so bad, really.

Biblically supersessionism brings out the true meaning of *Israel* and incorporates Jewish and all other ethnicities into the true meaning that previously God hinted at. Its entrance is non-exclusive, treating people as people, not peoples as peoples. Nicodemus, born into God’s ethnic kingdom, was subsequently born into God’s spiritual kingdom; likewise Pharisee Paul.

The ethnic-Jew/Gentile distinction had ended in Christ (Gal.3:28); Abraham’s true heirs were believers (7-29); they were like Isaac, children of promise (4:28). We can affirm Paul’s central teaching to decisively favour the idea of Christians as such being God’s Israel (Moo 2013:647). Paul’s *Israel of God* is the church.

### Revelation 7:4

“Then I heard how many people had God’s mark on their foreheads. There were 144,000. They were from every tribe of the people of Israel.” (ERV)

### Two groups?

On the surface, v9 superficially appears to contrast a group of folks which is countable by us—exactly or nigh on 144,000 (Rv.7:4-8)—to another group of folks which is uncountable by us (9). The former figure has been treated in various ways. Let’s dive below the surface, for superficial appearances can be deceptive.

Going in for literalism, the JWs initially claimed that the 144K tally included all of their rank and file. After numbers exceeded that figure, they disappointed their *hoi polloi* and tweaked it to all their elders as a heavenly salvation, with a lesser earthly salvation for their uncountable rank and file. As eldership numbers exceeded 144,000, they tweaked it to some of their elders (presumably including Peter, Paul, John, and James). Joseph Rutherford proclaimed that 1935 was the cutoff year—no more would be anointed ones, the 144K. But reopening the lottery, in 2007 they qualified that, saying that since some lost their heavenly seats, others could replace them. So buy your lottery ticket now from your nearest Kingdom Hall.

They have also had to tweak some other interpretations, such as 1914 (WW1) marking out the final generation before Jesus' final return (Mt.24:34)—the End Times of the Gentiles' dispensation<sup>20</sup>—a year they had calculated from [later] taking 607 BC as Babylon's destruction of the Judean temple and a marker of Seven Years. Then adding 2,520 years they arrived at AD 1914 (7 symbolic years of 360 day-years). At time of writing babies born in 1914 would be about 110 years old. A former JW, Carl Olof Jonsson, excommunicated for revealing the conclusive evidence against this, wrote *The Gentile Times Reconsidered* (<https://ad1914.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/the-Gentile-times-reconsidered.pdf>).

Going in for literalism, some more orthodox dispensationalists have claimed that the 144K tally is of non-Christian Ethnic-Israel, contrasted to the uncountable Christian church, even if most of the ethnic tribes have lost their identity. In a rough kind of way the latter does make some horse sense.

But why buy into literalism? After all, *Revelation* is a symbolic writing. Even in its Letters it redefined some ethnic-Jews as not Jews (2:9). And if there are two groups in 7:4-9, why not protect—

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<sup>20</sup> Lk.21:24 might simply mean Roman attacks on geographic Jerusalem which ended in the C2, a realised subtheme within ongoing eschatology, not an ongoing trampling until the parousia.

seal—ethno-Gentile Christians too (7:3; 9:4); why won't the latter sing the former's song (14:3)? Literalism can be wooden.

As Robert Mounce said, “the number is obviously symbolic. Twelve (the number of tribes) is both squared and multiplied by a thousand” (158; and also Aune 460). Indeed the term *thousand* is used elsewhere in *Revelation* symbolically. Some dispensationalists bow a little to symbolism, but still insist on two groups with the 144K being “all [ethnic] Israel...[not] a coded name for the Church” (Daalen 83).

I think the 144K symbolism's deeper and wider, indicating how the uncountable number functions—Yahweh's true Israel in military strength: David sinned in doubting, in trying to calculate how many soldiers he could deploy. My approach is somewhat different from van Daalen's, partly because of the seeming difficulty of gathering folk from disappeared tribes. Yes, God can do the intrinsically possible, but he can't do the intrinsically impossible.

Are tribes traceable? From what tribe, two millennia ago, did *I* come from? Did Jacob's tribes keep their tribal identity pure, never mixing with other tribes, even when ensconced in the promised land? And why is so much weight now put on tracing maternity, when Scripture put the weight on paternity? Assyria had uprooted the North, and the majority of those twelve tribes and their subsequent history, is long lost to us. Are they not dispersed with other genomes? Those of Israel which Assyria left behind became known as Jews, those of the dominance of Judah.

Will the two sides ever meet again as tribes? Even in John's days, many Jews had simply given up any hope of the twelve tribes reuniting, having to be satisfied with the idea that at least Israel was represented among pure Jews by the dregs left by Assyria. But the symbolism of ancient times remained. Yet with John F Walvoord (143), some folk still hold that the 'lost' tribes of Ethnic-Israel will be revealed at the end of this age. I think it a phantasmal triumph of hope over experience—will the phantom arise?

Besides the issue of identifying pure tribal identity, there is also the question of the protective sealing, which was seen as not for ultimate life, but *from* the plagues, and those sealed were called

servants of God (Rv.7:3). Sealing goes back to *Exodus*, when doorways marked, that is, sealed by lamb's blood, acted as shields against the angel of death. All Christians as God's servants and children, are of course within the true exodus, and might expect to be those shielded by God from his wrath against the world but not from the world's wrath against them. But why should ethno-Israelites be shielded *from God's wrath* upon the earth, yet ethno-Gentile Christians be unshielded?

And piggy in the middle, would ethno-Israelites who were Christians, be only shielded on their ethnic side—half-shielding? Or would only ethno-Israeli Christians receive a protective seal, when dispensationally speaking, it was only ethno-Gentile Christians who, without such protection from God's anger, would survive the great ordeal before entering God's joy?

Arguably Rv.7:3 refers to a sealing of all Christians throughout history, perhaps by the Holy Spirit (Beale 414). My little book on *Revelation* imagines reading it from a C1 church perspective, rather than as a framework for a literal seven year slot yet to come. John spoke of *then* future times; why assume they *are* future to us?

Remember, genetic coding to Abraham even through Sinai, has never ultimately defined *Israel-Jew*. Yeshua affirmed that his Sinai-Jewish audience were genetically children of Abraham (Jhn.8:37), yet disaffirmed the truest sense to that relationship (39-40): their inner attitude was demonic, not Abrahamic; their spiritual father was the devil, not God.

There was an inner/outer distinction. Saul, himself formerly a teacher of torah (Rm.2:17-20), said that the genetic descendants had *outer* benefits handed down, but not automatically *inner* benefits. Though a bone of contention, some beneficiaries were like tombs, neat and tidy outside, less so inside.

Commitment to torah had benefit, yet never at the new creation level. After all, all transgressed torah (the covenant obedience) is some ways and degrees, since it commanded right attitude, not simply right actions of which some actions were morally right (eg avoiding murder) and some simply covenantally right (eg avoiding mould).

Gentiles who were physically uncircumcised—uncovenanted to Yahweh—might coincidentally tick the directional actions and attitudes boxes commanded by Sinai, putting those circumcised under Sinai to shame (Rm.2:26). At heart Sinai was defined by the inner, howbeit expressed by the outer (28). Yet true covenant identity is in messiah (29).

Yes, the true circumcision were those in the multiethnic messianic congregation (Php.3:3; Col.2:11). Jeremiah had said that Yahweh counted Ammon, Edom, Egypt, Judah, and Moab, as equally circumcised (*dedicated*)—yet by ultimate standards they all were uncircumcised (Jr.9:25-6; Dt.30:6). So let us not assume that any Jew/Israelite talk in *Revelation* must literally mean Ethnic-Israel.

A new covenant was promised to Israel (Jr.31:31; Heb.8:8-9; 10:16). Was that to Ethnic Israel, or to Core Israel, God's unfolded Israel plan? This prophecy spoke in terms of reuniting North and South Israel, of a new unity. “The new covenant [would] express the prophetic conviction that there [could] be, and that there has been, only one unified people of God” (Dumbrell 145). Paul spoke of Christ's cross overcoming religious apartheid to reunite the global ethnic breach between Jew and Gentile—symbolised by Divided Israel—creating a unified humanity (Eph.2:11-22). John spoke of this United Israel—the church—as Yahweh's seemingly endless army.

### Lost tribes

As said, literal reunification doesn't seem to have been John's meaning: few expected it. The C1 ethno-Jewish historian Josephus said that some of his people assumed that the Northern lost tribes existed well beyond the Jewish diaspora which was scattered within the Roman Empire (Aune 461). There was indeed a touch of their Northern kin within Judah, such as Asher (Lk.2:36), and some hoped one day for the tribes not a touch, a torrent not a trickle. But “one strain of Jewish tradition held that the ten tribes would never be restored (b. Sanhedrin 11ob; ’Abot de Rabbi Nathan 31b)” (Beale 419). In short, some had given up hope, and some had not.

So did John know for sure? Or since he spoke of some Jews not being Jews, and of a temple almost the footprint of Australia and

cubic, and of stars like our sun falling on Earth, did he mean something else? So far as I'm concerned, John spoke symbolically of a powerful and well-structured army representing the whole unaccountable church as both God's true Israel and his united humanity under his true messianic king, throughout the millennia (Eph.2:15). See my *Israel's Gone Global* for more detail.

### Irenaeus and Dan

Give a dog a bad name. As to why Dan seems to be replaced, one idea goes back to Bishop Irenaeus, who assumed that a *the*-antichrist would come, and come from the tribe of Dan. I say *seems*: perhaps Dan was missed. I say *assumed*: the term is missing in *Revelation*. Here's why Irenaeus didn't think highly of Dan.

- An attack would be from Dan (Jr.8:16). But that was not from the then long exiled *people* of Dan—so why blame the people for the land? Babylon would attack from the north—so what? Yahweh even called Babylonia his army against his people (Jl.2:1,11), so it had his blessing.
- Dan had refused to help Israel fight against the Canaanites and Sisera (Jg.5:17). But so had Reuben (15-6).
- Without apparent opposition, Jeroboam set up one of his golden calf-idols at Dan. But he also set up one at Bethel in Ephraim (1 Kg.12:29). So why single out Dan?
- Amos used the town of Dan in the far north as a geographic point of idolatry. But he also used the town of Beersheba in the far south as a geographic point. Indeed like a sandwich the couplet could express the whole people in-between (eg Jg.20:1; 2 Sam.3:10; 17:11; 1 Kg.4:25).
- Gen.49:17 seems negative, but was Dan biting an invader's horse, any worse than Gad attacking an invader's heel (19)? And before we jump at any hiss from the Snake of v17, let us see how the exalted Snake of Nb.21:8 was redemptive at that time, and a prophetic pattern for the greater uplift of Jhn.3:14. The Snake motif cannot be determinative.

All the tribes had bad bits. Simply bad-mouthing Dan is unfair. As to claims of rabbinic negativity *apropos* Dan, “the tradition is not

found in any [ethnic] Jewish sources and cannot therefore be confidently thought to be pre-Christian" (Aune 463). The argument of Irenaeus "founders on the fact that Dan was included in the salvation of the eschatological people in Ezk.48" (Ladd 115).

There are other ideas as to why Dan is missing in surviving manuscripts. It could well be that John's original writing was miscopied, then in those dangerous times was destroyed, or stored safely and was never unearthed. In the Greek capital letters of his days, the letters D and M could be confused, and ΔAN could be misread as MAN short for Manasseh.

And it's no use checking from the tribal order—there is no normal tribal order. The tribal lists were all kinda higgledy-piggledy, though occasionally one might see some symbolism involved. *Revelation's* arrangement is unique because basically all the lists are unique. The initial order (Gen.35:23-6) was in line with Jacob's 4 wives, Leah {Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun}, Rachael {Joseph, Benjamin}, Zilpah {Gad, Asher}, and Bilhah {Dan, Naphtali}. Soon Levi dropped out and Joseph was split into Manasseh and Ephraim tribes. "In about twenty lists in the OT there are eighteen different orders" (Morris 1995:113).

Sample variations of Jacob's tribes<sup>21</sup>

Genesis 46	1	2	3	4	5	6	9	10	7	8	11	12
1 Chronicles 2	1	2	3	4	5	6	11	7	8	12	9	10
Ezekiel 48	11	10	12	7A	7B	1	4	8	2	5	6	9
Revelation 7	4	1	9	10	12	7A or 11	2	3	5	6	7	8

### Spiritual unity in diversity

The symbolism of 144,000 used of Yahweh's mindboggling human army "is explicit in the fact that Rv.7:4-8 is a census of the

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<sup>21</sup> Key: [1 = Reuben]; [2 = Simeon]; [3 = Levi]; [4 = Judah]; [5 = Issachar]; [6 = Zebulun]; [7 = Joseph]; [7A = Manasseh]; [7B = Ephraim]; [8 = Benjamin]; [9 = Gad]; [10 = Asher]; [11 = Dan]; [12 = Naphtali]. Using Gen.35:23-6's sequence.

tribes of Israel. In the OT a census was always a reckoning of the military strength of the nation" (Bauckham 77). Let it be immediately added that "we use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments" (NLT: 2 Cor.10:4). Christ's way is not to civilise by the gun but to enlighten by the gospel, and compared to human beings, civilisations and stars are merely ephemeral.

It's a spiritual army to be read in spiritual terms. As in *Numbers*, Rv.14:4 is compared to a men-only army, which practiced symbolic celibacy in times of war. Hence the reference to wartime symbolic purity for its men (Dt.20; 23:9-10; 1 Sam.21:5; 2 Sam.11:9-13; 1QM 7:3-6). That is, spiritual purity is symbolised: spiritually, OT idolatry was as fornication (see Daalen 126): see 1 Jhn.5:21.

It's not about misogyny, male Christian chauvinism, nor lifelong celibacy. It's about moral purity whatever one's age, marital state, and sex. It symbolises supreme commitment to God (holiness). Will Ethnic-Israel finally defeat its ethno-Gentile foes? No. But those under the Lion of Judah must oppose hostile worldviews, whether by ethno-Gentiles or by ethno-Jews.

"Just as 5:5-6 depicts Jesus Christ as the messiah who has won a victory, but done so by sacrificial death, not by military might, so 7:4-14 depicts his followers as the people of the messiah who share in his victory, but do so similarly by sacrificial death rather than by military violence. This interpretation is confirmed by 14:1-5, in which the 144,000 reappear.... In 14:1 the lamb and his army stand to oppose [their enemies] on Mount Zion, the place of the messianic king's triumph over the hostile nations" (Bauckham 78).

Though the NT church is painted in military paint, "the 144,000...like the saints elsewhere in *Revelation*, are worshippers more than soldiers" (Smalley 186). Messiah's death was the key military success against man's enemy, and we too must fight against sin (inside and outside of us) and the evil behind it.

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Rm.11:26; Gal.6:16; and Rv.7:4, speak of Christ's church, a mixture of ethnicities from Israel and from the Gentile world.

## Chapter 5      Salvation and Sinai

### Blessings under Sinai

Other than initial buying in to the covenant at Mount Sinai, and then occasionally by outsiders (eg Ruth), its people were simply born as its people. Hence Nicodemus was *without his choice*, born into the Sinai kingdom, but *with his choice* would be born spiritually into the messianic kingdom (Jhn.3:3). The former was his parents' doing; the latter would be God's doing for all those who welcomed his son as his son (1:13).

At the common level, all human beings are God's people. At the Sinai level, generally only those under Sinai were called his people, and the people, called his child. He who was simply Elohim to those outside of Sinai,<sup>22</sup> was Yahweh to those inside Sinai. At the Christian level, generally only those under Christ are called God's people, his children, looking up to messiah as his child.

What were the blessings of being under Sinai? On an individual level, that depended on your heart. One's heart could be opposed to Yahweh, or might simply not bother about Yahweh, or might be dedicated to Yahweh. All had the same duties to perform, which could be performed lovingly, or performed indifferently, or performed hatefully. Grace permitted the unwilling to leave Israel. All others remained under its blessings, though those indifferent to Yahweh were prone to switch to idols if they expected they had more to offer, as did many under King Ahab, when only 7,000 (a symbolic significant minority) remained true to Yahweh, an underground church, so to speak.

Actions could show the hidden heart, and evil hearts were best excluded from the community. The Levitical cultus which guided Sinaites, excluded *highhanded* sin—covenant defiance—from its forgive list (Nb.15:30). Under Sinai, highhanded sin opened the exit door from Sinai's immediate life, whether by literal death or by

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<sup>22</sup> The word *elohim*, was sometimes used polytheistically to indicate divinities, nonhuman spirits of power whether fallen or unfallen.

disgraced exile (Heb.10:28; Dt.17:2-7): the deadly OT term *kārat* (*cut off*) often meant *life excluded from the community*. As life outside Sinai had been symbolised as hell on earth—all gentiles were unclean, relatively dead to Yahweh—so *Hebrews* later symbolised that life outside the messianic community (excommunication) was immediate damnation, the life of the unclean, the new gentiles, waste, not literal death.

The guidance *Leviticus* offered can puzzle folk nowadays, long cutoff from the culture it spoke to, a culture common at the time with many in their wider world. Did not their wider world have some insight into God, making some effort to understand and worship him? Yahweh tweaked some general guidance he had given to his wider world, making the road straight for Sinai feet, favouring his chosen people with further revelation of himself and of spiritual life in general. For those with eyes to see, for they who had a heart for him, that was news to get them dancing for joy. Through their psalms, C S Lewis came to “express that same delight in God which made David dance” (Lewis 1958:43).<sup>23</sup>

Among other things, *Leviticus* and other writings of the Torah, taught a dynamic moving between the holy, the clean, and the unclean, and ways for willing hearts to be clean, even perhaps holy, and to enjoy standard and supra-standard intimacy with Yahweh. On balance, David was a man after God’s own heart. The Torah also revealed how, as a people, a tendency away from him would tend to increasing unhappiness with life, and a tendency towards him would tend to increasing happiness with life: discipline led to enjoyment. As in Heb.12:9, children who know what to obey and heartily obey, can truly enjoy family life whatever the weather. When we call God’s son, lord, it should be seen in this sense of direction, maturation, for our sakes. Torah helped in such ways.

Their exodus from slavery went deep. Sinai gave them a deep sense of belonging, not simply within a community, but within a unique

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<sup>23</sup> Incidentally, the notion that David danced naked, is utter tosh, but he did dance as a mere commoner, earning a royal wife’s contempt.

community, one rescued by, and covenanted to, Yahweh, who cared for them, who could be mutually close with them, and who could protect them from 'other gods'. Yes, by and large they remained polytheists who exclusively worshipped him who was in their eyes their god, the highest of gods, even the creator and father of gods, but still a god. Polytheism was a level of education well below Christian monotheism, but a level they shared in part with their wider world, which few of them rose above, and traces of such talk survives even in the NT writings, but should never in church. The Babylonian Captivity of Judah, seeing through Daniel the weaknesses of foreign divinities, seems to have taught a powerful lesson on the vanity of covenant straying.

Sinai offered many blessings of great depth. Such as a...

- kingdom, unique to them, so a sense of specialness;
- kingdom community, in which they shared commitments, insights, justice, and wellbeing.
- kingdom land, in which each small unit had a small holding and sense of individual identity and duties;
- kingdom fatherhood, in which together they were as Yahweh's child, not merely a servant, and indeed were taught that Yahweh loved them without needing them;
- kingdom assurance, for other than the option to leave if deeply desiring to, they would remain under Yahweh, and though prone to wander as witless sheep, communal goodness would result in a fruitful land and life, and they would be protected from foreign takeovers;
- kingdom priesthood, set up to help them to maintain and regain closeness to Yahweh, and to help with social justice;
- kingdom temple, as a spiritual focal point to connect with Yahweh, and to be forgiven of forgivable sins individually and as an annual community reset, the cry of many a heart;
- kingdom network of prophets, who could bring them clear instructions from Yahweh in specific situations, steering their ship on its general course.

The psalms offer us insight into the spiritual and social life of Sinaites, and sought to promote reflection and the eschatological hope of Yahweh's reign through an ultimate messiah. "Jesus and his disciples loved the psalms. So also did the covenanters at Qumran, to judge by the many manuscripts found in the caves there" (Blair 149). Martin Luther called *Psalm*s, a Bible in miniature, and "the psalms...are of great benefit to any believer who wishes to have help from the Bible in expressing joys and sorrows, successes and failures, hopes and regrets" (Fee & Stuart 205).

*Psalm*s show that "God was not marginal but a vital reality of Israel's life. The [OT] does not contain lengthy philosophical or theoretical essays about God. We hear about...God not from the essayist but from the worshipper. An annunciation of his attributes, even, is always in the context of [petition] or praise" (Martens 171). Their main types are Greatness, Groans, and Gratitude.

Greatness psalms extolled Yahweh and his works (eg creation, cultus, and city), and typically began and ended in praise. For example, Ps.117: "Praise Yahweh...for great is his love towards us...praise Yahweh". And Ps.8 is "an important hymn because it regards people as the occasion for praise and, incidentally, explains the basis for the possibility of a person's experience with God" (Martens 170). An Egyptian hymn to the divinity Aton, is an example of non-Israelite hymns, but the covenant relationship of Israel was unique.

Groaning psalms expressed laments, begging for Yahweh's help. They all—except one—end with assurance. For example, Ps.13: "How long, Yahweh...will my enemy triumph over me? Please look to me and answer.... I trust in your unfailing love. I will sing praise." They began with complaint, but ended in praise.

Gratitude psalms express thanks in three parts. For example, Ps.30: "I will exalt you.... You have saved me.... I will thank you." As we might say, You're wonderful. You've helped me/us. Thank you.

But were people under Sinai saved in any spiritual sense, and if so, are we saved as they, only perhaps more so? That they were spiritually saved, in a sense of being raised from primary to secondary level education about God, and even into a holiness of

inner life, I do not doubt. But as Donald Guthrie noted, there is a need to go deep and wide. “We shall need to consider the nature of repentance, the relationship between repentance and faith, regeneration and forgiveness. We are, therefore, approaching the study of Christian initiation on a broad front. We shall discover that different parts of the NT emphasize different aspects, and in order to gain a complete understanding we must aim for an over-all view.” (Guthrie 573). The principle is clear: we must dig deep and wide to know deeply and widely. As many points of view offer better safety for communities (Pr.24:6), so many biblical points of view offer better understanding for us of God’s landscape.

Were true Sinai Yahwists the same as are true Messianic Yahwists, Christians, as to relationship to God—*indwelt, regenerated/born anew*? I say No, and add that it’s useful to see the difference.

John Calvin taught that OT believers were indwelt by the spirit. Calvin’s perseverance-of-saints doctrine in both Testaments, perhaps required God’s spirit to live within (indwell), even if the regeneration is deeper for Christians. B B Warfield took a similar line. Feeling blocked by Jhn.7:37-9, pentecostal George Jeffreys argued that regeneration came before the cross and was by the personal spirit of Christ, not the person called the Holy Spirit who only came, in Jeffrey’s opinion, after the cross—was not righteous Abel able to be regenerate?<sup>24</sup>

Martin Luther taught that OT believers weren’t indwelt by the spirit. He held that Christians alone were indwelt and regenerate, but that Sinaites had merely been influenced by the spirit. John Walvoord took a similar line. Has the good news upgraded?

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<sup>24</sup> I would suggest that the prophet Balaam (like Caiaphas) was unregenerate yet worked the miracle of prophecy. “The distinction Jeffreys drew..is not one that has recommended itself to other Pentecostals or biblical scholars” (Kay 226).

### OT Indwelling?

The term *indwelt* can stir unease, and *co-dwelling* is in someways a better term, so long as we see that he's the landlord, not the tenant (1Cor.6:19-20); the president, not mere resident. Do you find the picture of deity indwelling you, distasteful, especially if of a man, namely Jesus, as some kind of *Star Trek* symbiont within you? Try picturing this spiritual fellowship as sharing your peasant hut with a most moral and royal guest—or three (2Pt.1:13).

But working with that basic metaphor, indwelling, was James Hamilton right to say that the spirit wasn't *within* OT believers, even if *regenerate, born from above* (*Themelios*, 2004:30.1.12-22)? He argued that the OT never clearly said that God's spirit was *within* any individual person, yet had clearly said that he was *among* Yahweh's people, and *upon* some he backed (anointed) for key jobs. God's spirit also had a special residency within the temple, which was a special place to fellowship with Yahweh and, if spoilers arose, to have any sin/offence that spoilt such fellowship, sorted. Some prophesied an indwelling level, but if the people were already indwelt, wouldn't that have been as meaningless as prophesying that ocean-based fish will someday have water?

Some who believe that he indwelt folk before the cross, point to Nb.27:18. But its contextual meaning is probably that Joshua was "a man in whom [was] the spirit of leadership" (NIV), the right kind of man to lead. If any were indwelt, they were exceptions to the rule, proving the rule that at least most within God's ancient people weren't indwelt, a stark contrast to the rule that all NT believers are indwelt, more enviable than was John the Baptist.

If Sinai believers could remain loyal without deific indwelling, presumably so can Christians, and indwelling would be added blessing. Loyalty to deity has always been possible by various factors, such as one's theistic community and personal encounter with deity. Though helpful, neither deity's indwelling individually nor communally, is essential. Naaman seemingly remained a loyal Yahwist within his pagan community, because as an *Imago Dei* he

had had personal encounter. Personal indwelling was future, as that prophet of individualism, Ezekiel, prophesied (eg Ezk.36:26). Scriptures like Hg.2:5 show that Yahweh's spirit was *among* his people, rather than *within* individuals. In short, the OT makes a better case for Yahweh's spirit not indwelling his people, than for indwelling them, and for a future new level of common individual indwelling. Indwelling is basic for Christians, and a distinction between Global Israel and Ethnic-Israel. In my books, individual indwelling of all believers is unique to the new covenant.

### **OT Regeneration?**

A few words from John: "...some people did accept [the Logos]. They believed in him, and he gave them the right to become children of God" (ERV: Jhn.1:12); "the spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet been raised to glory" (NCV: 7:39).

The Greek term *palingenesia* (Mt.19:28; Tts.3:5), translated into English from the Latin *regenerationem* as *regeneration*, depending on context can mean a reset to a former state, or a reset to a different state. It's similar to the ambiguous term, *born anew* (born physically again, or born spiritually new?), and indeed Donald Guthrie happily referred to "the teaching on regeneration in Jhn.3:5" (528), since its common overlap is deep-set in Evangelical circles. For convenience I too generally equate the terms. Jesus' use of the word was about eschatological hope; Paul's use was about existential hope of lives reset to a different state, a messianic state.

So, were OT believers regenerated? Getting back to George Jeffreys, think contextually. Jhn.7:39 doesn't deny the witness of the Holy Spirit in Sinai ways, but in context the spirit had not yet come in a messianic way—he *had* come upon Mary; he *had* worked with Yeshua. Like Jhn.1:12, there was a then-future dimension.

Sometimes we should think historically, as with Jhn.1:12. Their side of the cross, spiritually receptive Jews there and then couldn't be *new covenant* children of God, but could become so after the cross began the new covenant reality of God's family and kingdom. Picture them as having reservation tickets ready to enter when the

gate opened. *They welcomed the one who would die but hadn't; we welcome the one who won't die but had, the lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the hostile world.* To now say that receiving Jesus entitles people to *[in the future] become* children of God, wrongly implies either a second stage of welcome, or that believers only become family members after mortal death.

To that extent, even the apostles weren't messianic children of God until messiah had died. Before then, they were at the Sinai level, children of Sinai. The spirit lived *with* them, and later would be *in* them (NLT: Jhn.14:17). A there and then-ness (the Sinaitic covenant which Jesus himself lived within) was contrasted with a future indwelling, new birth, metaphors of spiritual depth.

But, you might ask, didn't Jesus represent *a group* who were already born anew, for didn't he say, "We tell you what we know and have seen" (NLT: Jhn.3:11—emphasis added)? No. He himself was not born anew, nor would Nicodemus have been interested in what his motley assortment of disciples, who weren't preaching new birth, happened to think—they weren't the group, nor were the group born anew.

In contrast to Nicodemus' *we know* (3:2), Yeshua linked in with the prophets' *we know*. They, now of that cloud of witnesses dwelling with God the son, and from whom he had come as son of man (Heb.12:1; Jhn.3:13), had spoken. Nicodemus failed to grasp what they had said, hence some real amazement that an OT expert neither knew nor saw this OT truth (3:10). Let's get into this.

John condensed the conversation to its main points. Nicodemus represented some who respected Rabbi Yeshua, who launched into his core focus, namely of a new *kind* of birth: *gennēthē anōthen*. But 'born anew' (CEB: 3), in some contexts meant born-again. That puzzled Nicodemus. Smiling, he asked if Jesus seriously meant being "born again...born a second time" (NCV: 4). Yeshua was a bit surprised that a fellow master rabbi's mind hadn't been focusing on birth "from above" (CEV: 7), spiritual birth, not a biological repeat, basic to seeing the soon coming kingdom which John the Baptist and Jesus the Baptist (Jhn.3:22) had prophesied.

Nicodemus and Jesus' disciples were already in God's Sinai kingdom as its children. A *new form* of kingdom was dawning—some deeper truer definition, that needed a new dynamic to enter, new eyes to see. That's regeneration, awakening, enlightenment.

Besides the cross opening it up, how is it achieved in our lives? Jesus spoke of water and spirit. These were OT themes, combined to speak of renewal or cleansing, and spoke of the spirit poured out (eg Nb.19:17-9; Ps.51:9-10; Is.32:15). Together they could "forcibly... signify cleansing from impurity...[and] the transformation of heart.... reminiscent of the 'new heart' expressions that revolve around the promise of the new covenant" (Carson 1991:195).

That was all in line with prophecies of an inner covenant (Jr.31:31), of transformation of the heart by the Ruach, God's spirit, like cleansing water (Ezk.36:25-6). Thus 'water/spirit' were two sides of a spiritual coin, a spiritual currency speaking of a new spiritual dimension, or layer, based on a predicted phase in God's global plan, and dawning in Nicodemus' lifetime. New birth is a picture of spiritual-DNA identity.

That is why John and Jesus, using the imagery of water-baptism, urged ethno-Israelites to prepare themselves for the messianic kingdom. As John put it, "I baptize with water those who repent of their sins and turn to God..." (NLT: Mt.3:11). Spiritual preparation made them more likely to be they who recognised and welcomed Jesus as messiah, thus candidates for the messianic kingdom.

It's good to see the fundamental difference between conversion to Christ, water-baptism, and spirit-baptism. Conversion, Paul said, was baptism (Col.2:11-3). And ideally, it should be followed by both spirit-baptism and water-baptism. On the day of Pentecost, both linked immersions for Christians featured: "be immersed, every one of you, on the authority of Yeshua the messiah, with reference to the [prior] forgiveness of your sins..." (ALT: Ac.2:38). And in their historical setting, after becoming Christians and publicly pledging commitment through the water-rite which symbolised their burial, new life, and allegiance (Rm.6-7), they too could be spirit-baptised—it was and is an ongoing offer.

And by the way, John's water-baptism was not *Christian* water-baptism, and as to hyphens, I use them here to underline that there are types of baptism—spirit-baptism, pain-baptism, etc. That water-baptism is not spirit-baptism, can be seen throughout *Acts*, and Luke was a historian *and* theologian (I Howard Marshall).

For instance, Paul asked Christians at Ephesus whether they had been spirit-baptised. Not all evangelists, or teachers, are good at getting Christians spirit-baptised, and Philip having water-baptised his converts, had left their spirit-baptism to Peter and John (Ac.8:12,14-5). But below standard, these Ephesian-Jews had neither been taught about Christian water-baptism, nor about the spirit, the hidden agent of conversion.

Asked about baptism in general, which was a general pledge made by new Christians, they replied that they had only been prepared for messiah by John's evangelism and national water-baptism. Paul explained that the new faith had its own rite to understand and to pledge commitment, namely Christian water-baptism. And after being water-baptised in the authority of the lord Jesus, these Christians were then spirit-baptised (Ac.19:1-6).

(By the way, some doctrines are based on an alleged right formula for water-baptism. In fact, the Bible teaches no formula, but in *Matthew* teaches its reference to the unity (one name) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in *Acts* says in various ways that its authorised by God's son—his *name* is behind it.)

*Acts* shows conversion, sometime followed by water-baptism and spirit-baptism in no essential order:

- Conversion→water-baptism→spirit-baptism: Ac.2:38; 8:12,17; 19:5-6.
- Conversion→spirit-baptism→water-baptism: 10:45,47.

Some speak of *baptismal-regeneration*, but if spirit-baptism comes after *baptism-conversion*, how can it come before? If spirit-baptism *is* conversion, how can Christian water-baptism come before? Neither spirit-baptism nor water-baptism are conversion.

Incidentally, the *baptismal-regeneration* idea is not always limited to infants, and some adult water-baptism ideas are clueless. When impelled by his mother, Stanley Tookie Williams was water-baptised, but it was so botched that he swore that his mother would have to straight-out kill him before he let anyone water-baptise him again (*Redemption* 2004:22).

Clueless mother; clueless son. But how many have been raised with the superstition that “the sacrament worked more or less magically” (Berkhof 248)? Sadly “countless hordes of babies have been water-baptised without ever coming into living membership of the covenant community of Christ” (David Wright: *Themelios* 2004:29.2.36).

What about 1 Cor.12:13? Put in its historical context of a church big on both spirit-baptism and division, it may be translated thus: “We were all baptised *in* one spirit *with reference to* one body”—to emphasise unity. The norm had been spirit-baptised, and the lowest Christian slave was spiritually level with the highest Christian master. It uses the same Greek prepositions as Mt.3:11, where John baptised “*in* water *with reference to* [prior] repentance”. Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were baptised *in* the spirit *with reference to* their prior conversion into the church.

It thus fits other contexts, such as Ac.2:38 where hearers were to repent and show it by being baptised in water *related to* (*eis*) their *prior* forgiveness which followed repentance, *after* which conversion-forgiveness they could enjoy the gift of the spirit. Luke showed that spirit-baptism came *after* forgiveness but sometimes *before* water-baptism, and sometimes *after* water-baptism (compare Ac.10:47; 19:5).

### *The levels of kingdom life*

I’ve given some reasons why I hold that Sinai saints were neither indwelt by Yahweh’s spirit nor regenerated. They were below the Christian level, but in line with common humanity they were Imago Dei, people in God’s image (Gen.9:6), able to walk with him even though not helped by the indwelling of new life.

One reason why the least in the messianic kingdom are higher up and deeper in than were the highest and deepest in the Sinaiitic kingdom (Mt.11:11), is that regeneration and indwelling has only ever come as part of the Christian package. But they of Sinai were on a higher level than common humanity.

Thus I speak of these three salvation states, dimensions, or levels, of Level 1 (common humanity), Level 2 (Sinai covenant), and Level 3 (Christian covenant). I guess we'd agree that with Christ's return, a fourth Level will come. We may say that for Sinai, folk had to die to commonality; that for Christianity, folk have to die to sin; that for ultimate life, folk have to die to mortality.

In Hakes 2021:201-2,

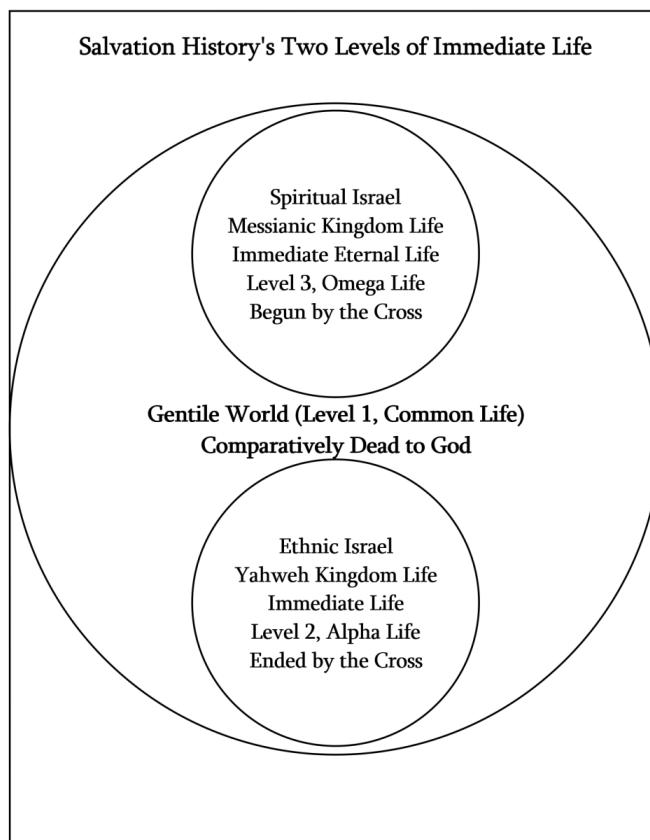
“...we see in Bunyan’s dream, that some characters who disregarded Christianity, were dumped into damnation (as was Demas). Indeed, only after dreaming that Ignorance was dragged off to the eternal fire, did Bunyan awake. I have re-dreamed of Ignorance as saved within the outer circle, a God-seeker, but not a Christ-seeker. This is Wider-Hope thinking.

“Ten thousand sages lost in endless woe, for ignorance of what they could not know?” These are question-lines from songwriter William Cowper. He called any who said Yes, *bigots!* His friend, John Wesley, also held Wider-Hope Inclusivism, but he still got on with his job of evangelism. Long before them, Church Fathers such as Clement of Rome, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus, held to Wider-Hope. A Middle Ages minority holder (it had fallen from fashion), was Peter Abelard.

“Arguably we could speak of Narrow-Hope teaching: a more technical term is Exclusivism. Within it, some have even taken unfruitfulness in Christian discipleship, to lead to hell. Espousing Narrow-Hope, evangelical Don Carson, in his commentary on John’s Gospel, nevertheless corrected the false idea that Jhn.15:6 spoke of eternal damnation for fruitless Christians. To that extent, Carson was more Wider-Hope than some divines of the past (including Bunyan). I stand more Wider-Hope than Carson. Some, holding to Universalism, are more Wider-Hope than I—Boundless-Hope! ....

"If we speak of four Levels (to wit, Adam/Sinai/Christian/Heaven), Bunyan's story features all four—Acharin leaves Adam (Level 1) and at the Gate directly becomes Christian (L<sub>3</sub>). In his Christian exodus (L<sub>3</sub> to L<sub>4</sub>), Christ saves him from Moses (L<sub>2</sub>). Crossing the final Jordan, he enters the final Canaan (L<sub>4</sub>). With John Wesley and John Bunyan, I argue that one can jump directly from L<sub>1</sub> to L<sub>3</sub>, and could from L<sub>2</sub> to L<sub>4</sub>. With Wesley but against Bunyan, I argue that one can jump directly from L<sub>1</sub> to L<sub>4</sub>, and commend evangelism as commanded for blessing man with salvation/heaven/assurance within mortal life. Since the dawn of man, heaven's door has always been open by the cross to whosoever will enter."

Levels two and three have both offered life to the comparative dead. Those of Sinai were comparatively dead to those of messiah (Eph.2:5), as we are to sin (Rm.6:11). Let's visualise these Levels.



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In my *Israel's Gone Global*, I looked into the whole covenant dimension of Sinai while it had lasted, and more widely looked at covenants with Adam and with Abraham. But here I have chopped back some interesting wood to focus on some trees. I have looked at marriage as representing the basics of covenant, in order to show that in spite of terms such as *eternal covenant*, covenants have a built-in option of annulment by any grossly betrayed party. Comparisons between so-called unconditional vs conditional covenants, tend to be based on the faulty premise that unless grounds for annulment were specified, annulment couldn't be.

But don't think that God is like some unloving husband always looking for a valid reason to divorce his wife. Though God finally annulled Sinai after its people's gross disloyalty, in grace it had played its part in the global picture as chaff to wheat, and having played its part (rather badly) it has not needed continuance beyond the cross. *Hosea* shows something of that grace, without meaning that ethnic-Israel would be restored. It said under ethnic colours that spiritual-Israel would arise, global wheat from local chaff.

We could also see that the covenant with Adam has by grace exceeded strict justice, and remains until Christ returns, when even the Christian covenant will give way to a higher and deeper relationship of the redeemed than covenant. My earthly parents never had a covenant with me; familyhood is deeper than covenant. Even *adoption* into God's family—though a precious and profound covenant bespeaking much truth—fails to convey the depths of being *born* into God's messianic family.

When does this new birth, this adoption, this glorification of stones into God's temple, begin?

Some suggest that it was when Jesus *breathed* that special time (Jhn.20:22). That's a nice idea with even a fancy name—Johannine Pentecost. But it misunderstands both Jesus' words and Pentecost. As Theodore of Mopsuestia long ago taught, it was to symbolise the then round-the-corner event of Pentecost. Whether Jesus inhaled, as if to say that they would receive like one draws breath,

or whether he exhaled, as if to say that he would impart the spirit like the breath of life, John did not say, though Bible versions often add a preposition, mostly *on*, but occasionally *exhaled/into/upon/inspired* (commendably Rotherham's simply says 'breathed strongly').

Some suggest that it was at Pentecost. Again, it's a nice idea with even a fancy name—the Birthday of the Church. But that too misunderstands both Jesus' words and Pentecost. That first Pentecost after the cross was a public enabling of the already existing Christian church, the Grand Opening. But to those who still hold to the idea that spirit-baptism and conversion are synonyms, just different pictures of the one event, it makes sense.

I suggest that the church began when after Jesus's resurrection, when he was first welcomed as the risen messiah. The women who visited him around the empty tomb, became the first Christians. Subsequently, anyone who welcomes him in faith as the risen messiah, is born into God's messianic family, the church, and becomes an individual member of a community which can even be pictured locally as differing bodily parts of a new body. The Good News has changed a level. But what is this change about? What is Christian salvation?

## Chapter 6 Christian Salvation

### Kingdom New

Prophetic pictures of Christian salvation spoke way back in the Garden.<sup>25</sup> Admittedly spoken with metaphors, as we still speak—coded language. So if you have a pet snake, weep not, neither be afraid. *Genesis* pictured both human waywardness from God as if drawn out by a slithery tempter, and how Yahweh even then had conceived a plan to overcome man's waywardness. The snake would not have the last laugh; a woman had been tricked—women would rue the day. But a woman's son would crush the serpent's head—women would be revenged. The woman's [great-great...grand] son would take the venom to overcome the evil sting of death. Man longed the day of salvation, God's new kingdom.

There is no doubt that the word-groups which we translate as *salvation*, cover a lot of things. R E O White spoke of one such Hebrew word-group—*yāšā'*—covering ideas such as “salvation from any danger, distress, enemies, from bondage in Egypt (Ex.14:13; 15:2), exile in Babylon (Is.46:13; 52:10-1), adversaries (Ps.106:10), defeat (Dt.20:4), or oppression (Jg.3:31, etc). Metaphorically, in salvation from social decay (Hos.1:7) and from want, the meaning approaches moral and personal welfare (‘prosperity’; *Job 30:15*); in Ps.28:9 religious blessing in general” (Elwell 967).

And in the NT we find that there is salvation from sin's power (Mt.1:21), from physical death (14:30), for ethnic deliverance (Lk.1:71), for physical healing (6:9), for protection from torment

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<sup>25</sup> “No philosophical theory which I have yet come across is a radical improvement on the words of *Genesis*, that ‘in the beginning God made heaven and earth.’ I say ‘radical’ improvement, because the story in *Genesis*—as St. Jerome said long ago—is told in the manner ‘of a popular poet’, or as we should say, in the form of folk tale.... The idea of creation in the rigorous sense of the word is there fully grasped.” (Lewis 1947:33). On the old chestnut of biological evolution, Perry Marshall's *Evolution 2.0* leads the pack, correcting both *Random Evolutionism* and *Intelligent Design*, by *Intelligent Evolutionism*.

(Jhn.12:27), for getting biblical sight (Ac.2:40), and for spiritual health (Rm.5:10).

I believe that even from Eden the snake's bite has been limited by God throughout human history, and that the Imago Dei has retained its sacredness (Gen.9:6), howbeit there may be justified occasion to at times fight to the death or execute unto death. And there is common grace, a general low level of salvation and common enlightenment by God's grace.

But our focus is on the spiritual side of biblical salvation, especially through the prophesied son. Abraham rejoiced to see Jesus' day (Jhn.8:56; Gen.12:3), a day pictured in many ways, such as a temple, a dwelling alongside. Some say that even in the garden there was a temple, a temple-connect which Adam lost. Temples, yes even tents, could picture Yahweh's closeness, and offer an option to draw close to him. The spiritual death mankind suffered was a cutting off from Yahweh—death is essentially separation.

I love ch.16 in C S Lewis' *The Silver Chair*, where Caspian, having died, meets Eustace in Aslan the Lion's country beyond death. Eustace is nonplussed: “‘Yes’, said the Lion in a very quiet voice, almost (Jill thought) as if he were laughing. ‘He has died. Most people have, you know. Even I have. There are very few who haven’t.’” Those cut off by death can be united by life beyond death, and death is not the end for God's people. Even Jesus has died. And even in mortal life we can connect post-Eden with Yahweh through a better temple. Yahweh's temple plan has focussed down to one man, Yeshua, and then multiplied into as many living temples as Yeshua's disciples have been, internalising his temple.

Having rebuked the superstitious sinful who pictured the temple of Yahweh as a magic fix (Jr.7:4), Jeremiah prophesied that the new covenant would be inside God's people, rather than outside (Jr.31). Though at work since creation, the spirit's mission of new birth began immediately after Christ's resurrection (7:39), getting folk into the new kingdom and the new kingdom into folk.

With messiah has come not a sea change but a kingdom change, the reign, the kingdom, of messiah. At the Christian level, with-

ness has been deepened into *within-ness*. It is an extra dimension and insight in human relationships with God, not an extra spirit living within mortal bodies. It is an added value of relational enrichment, along with the deeper aspects of community and personal fellowship with God. In a sense, it's like a baby finally getting to see the light of day (Jhn.3:3)—now we can drowse in the sun and sip our spiritual *milk*, but later feast on spiritual *meat*.

We need to see that the father is our destination, that his son is the way, and that the spirit is our individual navigator. We need to see that each Christian has direct throne entrance, temple worship, and prophetic insight, since community assets have internalised in Christ. Yet community remains vital: we “should not stay away from the church meetings, as some are doing” (NCV: Heb.10:25). At least not while reasonable firmity, age, distance, and mission, allow. Nevertheless, our primary identity is now in Christ, not in community, so we are not dependent on mortal priests.

I think that the term *indwelling* functions best in contrast to the previous top level of neighbourliness, which was *with* but not *within* (Jhn.14:17). *Indwelling* is a betterness, a deeperness, which the Writer to the Hebrews put in many different ways. Technically, it's a pictorial way to indicate a much fuller joy, insight, and activity, with God, than that foreshadowed in the Tanak, the OT.

Thus we can speak of ourselves as being ‘in Christ’. And no, we’re not *within* his physical body, but we are *on* his heart! Locative metaphors picture closeness and intimacy. Picture a sponge in water and water in the sponge—mutual residency, connection. Indeed, some picture the trinity a little bit like a perichoresis of a ball of three intertwined colours of thread, indivisible yet one.

Ours is a perichoresis relationship. As I clasp my hands, the fingers of my left hand intertwine with the fingers of my right hand. That I can dwell in spiritual Jerusalem, says something tremendous, and that spiritual Jerusalem can dwell in me, says something even more. Like adoption and new birth, two ways to tell the story.

- In the father: 1 Ths.1:1; 1 Jhn.3:24
- The father in: Jhn.14:23; 1 Jhn.3:24
- In the son: Jhn.6:56; Gal.2:20
- The son in: Jhn.6:56; Gal.4:19
- In the spirit: Rm.8:9; Rm.14:17
- The spirit in: Jhn.7:38-9; 1 Cor.6:19

Paul's meaning in 2 Cor.5:17 is a little fuzzy (Garland 1999:286). Are *we* new creations, or *in* the new creation? I suspect it's both. We're given new creation colour: "...if anyone is in Christ, that person is part of the new creation. The old things have gone away, and look, new things have arrived!" (CEB: 2 Cor.5:17). That's the glory now.

Paul pictured a new creation—a new *Genesis*, alongside a new Adam, a new Eden—and each Christian as incorporated as a full member of the new race of new humanity, having a new future without need of future redemption. The new outlook is one of having died to the old *Genesis*, and risen to new life in the new *Genesis*. John likewise began his Gospel with this true genesis. Paul often spoke of this, and it was worth waiting for, wasn't it?

Many, many, waited for gain, but when it came it came with pain. Now, if you don't have to be a Christian to gain ultimate life, and in this new age you may suffer pain for such belief—as the NCV well puts it (Mk.10:30)—is it worth being a Christian? And if we happen to get hooked on its truth, Jesus junkies, can it be immoral to get others hooked, to evangelise them, if the good news is pain over gain, say in a Muslim or Muslim-becoming country? Wasn't Karl Marx right to warn of Christianity being like a potentially dangerous drug? While he feared it was a painkiller dealt out by the bourgeoisie to keep the proletariat docile, is being the most addictive truth drug its real danger? What is truth worth?

Is it worth death? Islam can demand execution for those born into its community who turn to Isa (Jesus) as to a better, and tax others into conformity. Judaism holds that ethnic-Jews who turn to Yeshua as to messiah, die to their families and communities. Hindus are none too happy with those who claim that its gods are

no more than divinities, and that all divinities bow to God. Atheistic Communism (or liberal England, for that matter) can bully by more than name-calling, any bigots who do not comply with their creeds. Is it worth it, if we get it in the neck?

### Kingdom Individualised

Well, one gain we get is truth about individualised blessings. Of course our fundamental individual response to God is first required by God and cannot be given by any third party: it's not *sola fide*, but *fides necessaria est*.<sup>26</sup> And mere individualism is a serious error. 1 Cor.12:27—"all of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it" (NLT)—combines individualism and togetherness. Failure either at the individual or community level, is serious failure, but I'll focus on the individual level.

### Kingdom land

We now get individualised land, our personal space of wellbeing and security—it is well with my soul. Theology often has this four levels approach: common land (Gen.1:28—before language: a pre-alpha level); promised land (Sinaitic—the alpha level); promised land (Yeshuic fulfilled—the omega level); ultimate land (post-death universe/heaven—post omega: beyond mere language).<sup>27</sup> Ultimate land has never been given by levels 2 or 3, but promised land here and now, has.

Has God given the land of Palestine to Ethnic-Israel? "Firstly, compared with the OT portrait of the Israelites' time in the land of Canaan, the modern State of Israel clearly lacks those elements which we have noted as prominent in *Genesis-Kings*. There is no

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<sup>26</sup> For Christian faith, Scripture is necessary: *Scriptura necessaria est*; grace is necessary: *gratia necessaria est*; faith is necessary: *fides necessaria est*; the cross is necessary: *crux necessaria est*; giving glory to the trinity is necessary: *trinitatem glorificare necessarium est*.

<sup>27</sup> The pre~ post~ language thing highlights Scripture. Before Moses we were preliterary before Scripture. By Moses we had preparatory writing. By messiah we had fulfilment writing. Beyond mortality we will be postliterary beyond Scripture, beyond mere language.

temple to provide a sacred location, the population cannot be viewed as the covenant people of God, and there is no rest. Secondly, the NT writings look beyond the limited fulfilment of the promises associated with land in the OT, to a much greater fulfilment” (Johnston & Walker 49).

Land was basic to identity. Ethnic-Jews had covenantal right to ancestral plots of land, which King Ahab would kill to get. Our hearts are with what we treasure (Mt.6:21). Jesus challenged his fellow Jews to give him their birthright and become outsiders, and to travel to eternity in penultimate exodus. That is, to spiritually relinquish their social land rights—the spiritual can impact the social. Going back to Mk.10:29-30, some sold their physical land to help their new hundredfold family. And with an eye to Mk.10:30, persecution would soon hit home and force such sales. Abraham had been prepared to give up his ultra special son (Heb.11:17).<sup>28</sup>

Within years of messiah’s death, many would happily give up the old land claim, downsizing to help the socio-economic poor among them (Ac.4:34-7). Keeping their ancestral nontransferable plot of land, had been important to them as a covenant gift. But they had come to see that the promised land’s spiritual meaning had transferred to messiah and to his covenant.

Messiah was their true land, and he wished his true people to attitudinally wave goodbye to the geographical Promised Land, to embrace him as their true land. Those committed to him are neither to idolise Sinai land as hajjis, nor defend it as land he had walked. Justice remains justice, and biblically the Sinai land has become irrelevant theological chaff. When the Sinaitic Covenant ended, Ethnic-Israel’s spiritual stake in the geographical land, lapsed. That land is now simply common land, desacralised.

There has always been spiritual land linked to land-levels. Empires come and go. “They were a powerful people, and rich, and great

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<sup>28</sup> Most Bible versions fall short here. It’s not *only*, *one and only*, and definitely not *begotten*. It is *unique*, *one-of-a-kind* (HCSB/ISV). For translation for the Gk. *monogenēs*, see the NET comment on Jhn.3:16.

builders. They built to last, for they thought their city would last for ever.’ ‘But what became of them all?’ asked the Mole. ‘Who can tell?’ said the Badger” (Grahame 87). “Abraham was confidently looking forward to a city with eternal foundations, a city designed and built by God” (NLT: Heb.11:10). “It was because of [messiah] that I gave up everything and regard it all as garbage, in order to gain the messiah” (CJB: Php.3:8).

The true land, and all it means—not the shakeable land of shadows—is ours in Christ in whom we stand; it’s our stake in Yahweh’s kingdom. Abraham himself lived in secular land. However, his El Shaddai relationship (positioned between the Gentile Elohim relationship (Level 1) and the Sinaitic Yahweh relationship promised (Level 2)), connected Levels 1 and 2, and Abraham showed how by putting God first, Gentiles could, as Abel (Heb.11:4), be deemed righteousness. That same faith, when joined with the evangel, opens up Level 3, so that Abraham is our father/pattern.

Yeshua’s kingdom was not of this world. He taught attitude, not necessarily literal exactitude. Whatever their racial roots, the NT addressed Christians as wanderers, the diaspora, unsecured by social identities, their true treasure and identity heaven-based, and thus being, we may add, of most earthly good, since not socially competing for positions of identity. Sure, some wouldn’t be expelled from their families, communities, geographic Israel, etc, but all as Abraham in offering Isaac, should hang loose to such ties, and hang on to Yeshua and his teaching above all social aims.

But Christian conversion is not a cop-out, and existing obligations to others might remain imperatives. Potentially it is a big ask. “Jesus said, ‘I assure you that anyone who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children, or farms, because of me and because of the good news, will receive one hundred times as much now in this life—houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and farms (with harassment)—and in the coming age, eternal life” (CEB: Mk10:29-30). Conversion is so individual, moving us into spiritual land.

### Kingdom kids

Besides individualised land, we get individualised filiality. Once, Ethnic-Israel was Yahweh's son by adoption (Hos.11:1), never by genetic paternity. King Saul called David his son (1 Sam.26:25). Saul's genetic son Jonathan had a covenant brotherhood with David (brotherhood is closer than marriage), but they weren't genetic siblings. Adam was God's son (Lk.3:38). There were some OT glimmers of individualisation, such as for a task (1 Chr.28:6).

Yahweh's ultimate temple-building son, was in fact not David's son, Solomon, but was David's son Yeshua, our messiah, himself the temple, and identified with him we too are siblings of that son, pictured both by birth and by adoption. We are even pictured as living parts of God's messianic temple, and as organic parts of messiah's spiritual body. There are many tie-in terms.

And our focus should be our father, not our brother. *Jesus Onlyism* is a *Jesus Jesus Jesus* blindness, a bit like the old fixation on Yahweh's *temple temple temple* of Jr.7:4. It downrates the father, the spirit, and even the son noncarnate, in favour of the man christ Jesus. My, *The Father's Gone Global*, covers this in much more depth. If *only* Jesus is on our brains, our brains are too small. Kingdom kids are kids of the father, not of the lord.

Here's snippets from various Onlyism songs. "Only Jesus can satisfy your soul; only Jesus brings redemption; only Jesus satisfies; Jesus only is our message; Jesus only will we see; Jesus all in all we sing; Jesus only is our saviour; Jesus only is our healer; only Jesus can our every sorrow know; you alone are God, Jesus!; [Jesus] alone can truly help us." Tommyrot! Jesus was and is the *way* (Jhn.14:6), the exodus. To the extent that we don't see the *destination*, he's failed.

Thomas Smail described God the father as the forgotten father! And James White, perhaps with an eye on that, wrote *The Forgotten Trinity*. Here's three daily prayers to develop and maintain father-first trinitarianism. ① *father*, I love you; brother, I love you; helper, I love you. ② *destination*, I love you; way, I love you; navigator, I love you. ③ *God*, I love you; lord, I love you; spirit,

I love you. Regularly thank the *father* for sending his son; his son for becoming one with us; the spirit for living with us.

And here's a daily catechism to disengage from the common 'the LORD' workaround for God's name, and to go with Paul (1Cor.8:6): Who is God? The *father* is God! Who is lord? Jesus is lord! Whenever I read where an English Bible has [the LORD], I simply read [Yahweh], whether privately or in public, lifting what he inspired over human tradition. Should we say [the Lord] whenever we see the name, [Jesus]? Dare to call God by his name.

And to whom should we pray our requests? To God, not to the lord! OK, these suggestions might shock some, and they could be bettered. But they stand as blunt pointers in the biblical direction, to help reverse reader by reader the West's slow slide into Sabellianism. Long ago I purged my prayer-life of asking *the lord*, of confusing the persons, and I haven't asked *the lord* for anything for around five decades. We are kids of the father, not of the son.

Not to thrash this theme to death, I'll bullet up to button up.

- Jhn.10:30: the father and his son *are* one, but the Greek neuter gender implies oneness in *purpose* not personhood.
- Lk.11:2: request-prayer was to our *father* not to our brother.
- Jhn.14:14: the KJV simplifies by taking away a word, but the authentic text simply means that while requests are *directly* to the father and answered by the spirit, the son *indirectly* is asked and answers. That's in line with 16:23.
- Asking others: I do not rubbish those who request via saints mortal or saints immortal; Evangelicals or Catholics. I merely say that if they don't *also* ask the father direct, they fall below biblical standards of insight and boldness.

One of my few revelation days (epiphanies) came through reading an article by an Australian pastor, Leo Harris, on Jhn.16:27. I was suddenly aware that the father of my lord was himself aware of me, and had waited long for me to speak, himself loving me. A bit like the Great Lion waiting patiently at the pool for Jill Pole to begin a conversation, or walking alongside Shasta in the mist (*The Silver Chair*, and *The Horse and His Boy*, respectively: C S Lewis). As a young

teen I cautiously knelt at my bedside, apprehensive lest I be blasted (were Harris wrong) for the sheer audacity and wonder of speaking to God *as my father*. Each Christian is a child of God the father, free to love him and to be loved by him.

### Kingdom assurance

Besides individualised filiality, we get individualised assurance. In the ethnic kingdom, Solomon built a temple, a site for restoration-forgiveness and for fellowship. That need pre-existed Solomon. Do you know the one about Adam passing the blame? He blamed his wife, she blamed the snake, and it didn't have a leg to stand on;) Adam's sin corrupted interpersonal relationships upline (with God), sideline (with each other), downline (with nature), even intraline (inner disharmony). Humanity, fallen out with God, decays, since "sin, while it involves acts, is at its base relational failure" (Martens 55).

On relational failure with God, I think of books such as Jeff Fynn-Paul's insightful *Not Stolen: The Truth About European Colonialism in the New World* (2023). When God is cut off, especially God-through-Christ, if nurturing remnants of moral impulses, darkened minds can come up with idolatry such as the intellectually fallacious Critical Race Theory. "...Their thinking became useless. Their foolish minds were filled with darkness" (NCV: Rm.1:21). On the one hand, CRT seeks to disgrace the wonderful benefits which Christendom, especially through Imago Dei teaching and Christian relationship with God, has made to the rest of the world, often through the blessings of colonisation. On the other hand, CRT concocts values the non-Christian world lacked, fabricating a glowing history it deems blighted by Christendom, ignoring the then normalities of enslaving or eating your enemies.

By *Christendom*, a socially significant term, I mean here the areas predominantly in and from the European arena and its developed areas such as the USA, when culturally aligned deeply with, and harnessed firmly to, the Christian revelation. I am well aware that Christendom never made any one a Christian, and that where there are people, there is hypocrisy and brutality. Indeed, as Breda Cox pointed out in *Fashionable Goodness* (2022), in Regency

England, adultery by gentlemen, was condemned a darn sight less in high society, than officially in Anglican circles. For Christian teaching was to many a scab, a cultural add-on to core lifestyle.

Lacking assurance of God, the common world lacks assurance of God's smile and his rebuke (Lv.26). In the ethnic kingdom, Yom Kippur (*Atonement Day*) was intended to repair the national drift (Ex.34:7; Ps.32:1-2) and to reinstall the community's operating system, while patches were applied individually throughout each year at point of need. Forgiveness as restoration through rites, was about keeping the temporary covenant link, never a matter of purity or of destiny. There was a shadowy idea of separation after death (Dan.12:2).

In the messianic kingdom, assurance of eternal destiny became internalised, individualised. It's not because you are a member of a community. It's because you are you. The whole covenant is individualised. Each member now has God's love placed inside (Rm.5:5). Funnily enough from the KJV's 'shed abroad' and ignoring its 'in', I once thought Paul meant *shed it abroad* by evangelism!

In Christ we are made right with God. Since ultimate forgiveness can come through *outside* of Christ but *because of* Christ, the distinction *in Christ* is one of assurance. That said...

- depending on a certain doctrine, some lack sure and certain assurance. They cannot be sure they are elect, nor about who is, believing that that knowledge lies solely in God's sovereign mind, and that the human heart is totally depraved. They have reasonable assurance and hope.
- depending on a different doctrine, some believe they can repeatedly lose and regain their *ticket to heaven*, and can at best hope to die holding that *ticket*. Inconsistently, John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, pictured an essential yet losable *ticket to heaven*.<sup>29</sup> They have wavy assurance.

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<sup>29</sup> This story uses allegorical characters, and shows Bunyan's inconsistency on this point. One character, Formalist, can't gain

- depending on another different doctrine, some hold that any Christ-welcomer must at core level be a God-welcomer, and the *ticket* is to all God-welcomers—not gained by gaining Christ, and not lost if losing him. They have full assurance.

On assurance, some presumed that Rm.8:1 offered too much grace, and presuming that God's assurance must be based on our performance, they qualified Paul. Paul assured us that "...there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Full stop, period (NIV: Rm.8:1). But they added, in two stages, qualifications to God's assuring scripture. Wycliffe following the Latin Vulgate, picked up one such qualifier: *whiche wandren not after the flesch*. Tyndale, following Stephanus, picked up the extra qualifier: *but after ye sprete*. The KJV following Tyndale, kept both: *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. But the rare Greek word *katakrima*, assures us of our blest exclusion from exclusion within mortality, or/and of exemption from ultimate condemnation beyond mortality. And both ways are independent of our lifestyle. We have assurance of God's kingdom now (Col.1:13), and of God's kingdom to come. When it comes to daily sins in reference to deity, it's simply about the health level of our daily fellowship. Assuming there were two, bear in mind that both paternosters (Mt.6:9-13 and Lk.11:2-4) were to pre-Christian audiences, Sinai audiences, though they now have extra depth for a messianic audience.

"Forgive us, as we forgive." Regarding our forgiveness, it's about our attitude. Being hostile to forgiving those who offend us, can render the father unable to relationally forgive us when we offend him. We could liken it to a fallout between husband and wife, when ice covers their relationship yet ends not their marriage. Even our black bitterness, our inner growl from our hidden Fenris,

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heaven without getting a ticket. One character, Christian, can't gain heaven without getting a ticket but gains, loses, and regains a ticket. One character, Hopeful, can gain heaven without getting a ticket.

offends his holiness. By resentfully blocking others we can block God. This prayer is about heaven now, not with gaining heaven.

The paternoster focuses both our attitudes towards being forgivers, fellowship builders, and our minds towards the daily need to be readjusted at the fellowship level. Even Sinai had an optional offering for fellowship, for those who didn't wish to be left alone by Yahweh (Lv.3).

James urged Christian sinners, the double-minded who were toggling between living towards God and living against God, to repent their sin. He spoke of significant drifts away from the father, throwing in some Greek aorist tenses to underline the urgent decisiveness needed in getting back to God the father.

But even pleasing James won't achieve sinless perfection in this life. For daily walk with God, we still seek his daily forbearance, as we cultivate his attitude of forgiveness towards those who sin against us. But it's neither to gain, nor to guarantee, our ultimate forgiveness. Rest assured we stand forgiven into God's kingdom, and as Jean Darnall nicely put it, Heaven, here I come.<sup>30</sup>

### *Kingdom priests*

Besides individualised assurance, we get individualised priesthood. Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng said that it "is important that the positive significance of the priesthood of all believers be realized.... [Every Christian is able to have] direct access to God, [make] spiritual sacrifices...in a spirit of love and self-giving ...preach the word and administer [water-]baptism, [and] the Lord's Supper...[having come into] the mediating work of the one and only mediator" (372,381). That's far from the official Catholic line, but I would argue that it's closer to the biblical line.

On this Küng's word to Protestants was, Practice what you preach. Believer-priesthood, Body-ministry, is often disempowered by, for instance, networks that have hierarchical network terms such as

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<sup>30</sup> Jean Darnall's Heaven, here I come.

*bishop*—even if only squeezing into the world’s mould for political clout—and top-down control over local church autonomy.

I hold that life beyond death extends beyond the messianic church. But I hold that only and all those who enter messiah’s core revelation, are *true* priests, temples, royalty, etc, in mortal life. And I hold that not all ecclesiastic priests, bishops, etc, are actually Christians. Wolves can dress as sheep and wear dog-collars, and some sheep transition outside the flock. And I hold that all other world religions lack *true* priests, even as they lack *true* religion, even though they have valid insights which help their devotees to approach God. More anon.

Do I agree with Künig that women can be priests? I was asked that when applying for a post at the Wigan AoG under the leadership of Ray Belfield, a local giant in the spirit in those days. My answer remains the same—Yes, if Christians then priests, ministers. As regards church jobs, if they can do ‘em, let ‘em, I say, within the courtesy of not needlessly damaging toes. Same goes for men and for children. I don’t say that all people are interchangeable. Nor do I say that the genders are totally interchangeable in function. I say that all those in Christ are equally priests *vis-à-vis* the father—it’s this level I’m focusing on.

“We...have access to the father through Christ by the one spirit” (CEB: Eph.2:18). There is no priestly *level* within Christianity, because Christianity *is* priestly. The term *priest*, like the term *minister*, is somewhat misleading, though many office holders do fantastic jobs. And all Christians are general ministers/servants (*diakonoi*), though some specialise as servants/deacons (Php.1:1).

“Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the church...” (Douay-Rheims Bible: Jas.5:14). Wycliffe also had *preestis* here, but in fact *elder*, not *priest*, properly translates Greek term *presbyteros*: “the term priest as used today is not identical in meaning with the word presbyter as it was originally used.... [and *Hebrews*] made it unmistakeably clear to any who...hankered after the ritual of the past, that Christ has...fulfilled, superseded, and abandoned...the priesthood of the OT” (Künig 364-5—rearranged). And

the Greek word for priest, *hierous*, “is not used...anywhere in the NT for someone who holds office in the church” (Küng 364).

Becoming a Christian is becoming a priest, since conversion is consecration. Our sacrifice is mediated through Christ and is about thanksgiving and praise. Its core is offering ourselves, not things (Küng 369; Heb.13:15; Rm.12:1). We need no mediator other than messiah, nor is mediating for sinners our duty, though evangelism is. In Christ we have God’s attentiveness—within the royal priesthood we’re priests unto God (Rv.1:6), priestly service being worship: “John used images of [Ethnic] Israel to describe the ...church” (Smalley 36). Are you playing a priestly part?

### Kingdom temples

Besides individualised priesthood, we get individualised temple-status. Are you a temple? This extends the idea of indwelling (Jhn.14:23) to carry more dynamic. As priesthood pictures holy work, so temples picture holiness within. Under Sinai, the holy tent/temple was the very orb of national worship. Some hoped the temple would save them: “Yahweh’s temple, Yahweh’s temple, Yahweh’s temple”, they chanted (Jr.7:4). Yahweh heard them, then demolished it. Even Ezra’s temple rebuild, upgraded under the Herods, got the chop under Titus. Some ethno-Zionists hope for a temple rebuild, red heifers, Levitical sacrifices galore, and racially and religiously purified land with its secure borders.

The NT used the term temple in organic ways, and “when Jesus said ‘this temple’, he meant his own body” (NLT: Jhn.2:21). Jesus was the true, *alēthinos* temple, enabling us to be true temples. Likewise, he was God’s true child, enabling us to be true children of God. Likewise, he was God’s true light, enabling us to be true lights of God. Sinai institutions, structures, even people, sometimes doubled as prophetic of what would come at Level 3. “Some things ‘predicted’ in the [OT] were not set out as verbal predictions, but as pictures, events, peoples, institutions” (Carson 1991:182). Yeshua was the true temple which the physical buildings had predicted. God’s son *pitched his tent* among mankind (Jhn.1:14). That’s what the Greek *skēnē* literally says.

A more awesome cosmic temple is yet to come, for the father shall pitch his permanent tent site (*skēnē*) with us (Rv.21:3). Until then, all except God the father will be subjected to Jesus, the supreme commander appointed by his father to be lord (Php.2:11). But then the father, the king of the king over all mortal monarchs, shall take over (1 Cor.15:27-8). And by the way, "...all in all" in 1 Cor.15:28 "is not the absorption of Christ and mankind, with consequent loss of distinct being, into God, but rather the unchallenged reign of God [the father] alone, in his pure goodness" (Barrett 1986:361).

Once the irredeemable is subjugated by Christ, the redeemed will be joyfully presented to God, who will then be utterly supreme over everything everywhere. Like J R R Tolkien's story in which Aragorn entered Minas Tirith to be its king, God the father shall ultimately take his place among us, as if the true glory has only just begun (Rv.21:22)—but oh what tasters are ours!

So, God the son, and God the father. But there's also God the spirit pitching his tent in us here and now—we are holy places, temple shrines of the spirit. It's far better that ethnic-Jews become living temples rather than rebuilding a meaningless stone temple. Here and now we stand as awesome temples individually, together, and globally across the generations, reflecting and radiating the true temple. Our light should not be hidden (Mt.5:14).

Is.60:3 prophesied Yahweh's light shining on the Gentiles, I guess Jerusalem being the lamp. She would be called "Yahweh's City, Zion, of the holy one of Israel" (CEB: Is.60:14). Will the true Jerusalem please stand up? Paul pictured earthly Jerusalem, which had been God's lamp in salvation history. He also pictured spiritual Jerusalem. By clinging to the past after the light had moved on ("Jerusalem in its present state" (NJB: Gal.4:25)), she became like slave-Hagar, spiritually sunken into Gentile status, on par with common humanity (Rv.11:8). And her children were never true/free-Israel.

By grace we are like free-Sarah, true-Sarah, true lamps. In this age we are individually worship sites, mobile tents that signal God's nearness and the knowledge of forgiveness. Each of us has become

a shrine, a most holy place (*naos*: 1 Cor.6:19), where God indwells in covenant (Jr.31:31-3). At times we come into a local worship site, a local congregation (1 Cor.3:16-7), as temples within a temple. At times, as assemblies, we reflect on the bigger picture again, the temple worldwide and spanning millennia (1 Pt.2:5).

The definition of *Israel* has moved on; the definition of *Jerusalem* has moved on; the definition of *temple* has moved on—much has moved on and left many behind, cut off from the root plan. The New Jerusalem now shines the temple radiance from God’s hill, shines into a dark world God’s love and his redemption offer, covenant entrance. If you are a Christian, you are a mobile messenger of Yahweh’s shalom, a walking talking living Jerusalem. Let your light so shine—and offer him praise for his praise-worthiness, and gratitude for his grace to us.

### Kingdom prophets

Besides individualised temple-status, we get individualised prophet-status. It combines sensitivity to the spirit, with Christian Bible-perspective. Indeed the latter foundationally helps us discern which prompts are merely from our spirit, not from the spirit of God. Prophetic speaking is speaking in line with God’s spirit. In the Sinai kingdom, prophets were major players. Let’s look at the prophet Moses.

Moses prophesied within his uncompleted exodus, of a later prophet who would no less than himself mediate between the people and Yahweh (Dt.18:15-9)—other prophets of lesser rank would also come, some Yahwistic, some deceptive (20-2). John Wesley said that “Christ was truly...a prophet and a king and a priest and mediator, in the excellency of his ministry and work, in the glory of his miracles, in his familiar and intimate converse with God.”

Let’s sidetrack a little to messiah as covenant-mediator. A king can mediate in national and international ways. A prophet can mediate in spiritual communication from God. A priest can mediate in spiritual restoration and wellbeing. A covenant-mediator is in a sense a middleman, an arranger setting up some covenant: Multitasker Moses was such; messiah was more so.

Covenants have tokens of their importance, such as death, wedding rings, etc, but in the greatest covenant, death was a battle field and a substitution, no mere token. As both sacrificed and mediator, Christ mediated the new covenant, delivering us from what under Sinai were transgressions atoned simply by temporary patches. Eternal inheritance begins at conversion. Moses did not die to set up the covenant, but as its prophet declared Yahweh's plan, largely through the Pentateuch, the Five Scrolls. Messiah declared Yahweh's plan through the new covenant writings. And unlike Moses, Yeshua completed his exodus (NABRE/NLT: Lk.9:31).

As prophets mediate God's message, with Jesus the prophet we get one who is the unique stream of God's logos (Jhn.1:1,14), taking his people into the true exodus, and speaking God's message to them within. But are we righteous enough to be prophets? One outstanding prophet righteously lost his head over Herod Philip's ex-wife (Mt.14:3). Christian men are more prone to unrighteously lose their heads over women. Christian men, women, and children, know that unfortunately their sins abound, but that fortunately God's grace abounds more. Christians have the best exemplar but unlike him are not exempt from sin. Yet even if you are among the least (micro) of Christians, neither as holy in lifestyle as the greatest Sinai prophet was, nor as dynamic in God's kingdom, you're better placed than John was, for unlike him you are within the messiah's community (Mt.11:11).

Christians suffering social intimidation and exclusion in Asia Minor were told that "they were more privileged in the perspective of redemptive history than they could have known—more privileged than either the great prophets of old or angels above" (Jobes 105). For as the Sinaitic Mountain (salvation level 2) dwarfed world religions, so the Yeshuic foothills (salvation level 3) dwarf Sinai's pinnacle. Under Sinai, Moses wished that all would have Yahweh's spirit (Nb.11:29); under Yeshua, all may prophesy (1 Cor.14:31).

In each local church each Christian may prophesy as part of the charismatic skills base. Of course as Paul taught, to keep things on track others should weigh what's said and correct any glitches. In

short, our prophetic output is fallible—even prophetic uplifting songs, which few care to examine (see my *Singing's Gone Global*).

The spirit impart ideas (1 Cor.14:30) which we fallibly frame, hence audiences should critically assess Christian prophesies. “The passive voice of *ἀποκαλυφθῇ* (*apokalyphtē, is revealed*) suggests that God’s spirit reveals something to an individual during the worship or before it (see Php.3:15)” (Garland 2015:15159-61/28028). Sometimes our prophetic revelations should be unspoken.

But to canonical revelation, which is far beyond the best insights of the ancients, charismatic revelation is in fact a minor though blessed sideshow. All Christians are in the prophetic school and may speak in class. We might not all foretell/predict, but we may all forthtell/proclaim as prophesiers of God, low level prophets.

Christ established Christian prophets and Christian evangelists, and both should work side by side (Eph.4:11). I suspect that evangelism takes on part of Christ’s prophetic message. It proclaims the new message, and works well with the element of predictive prophecy.

The latter functions at various levels as messages in line with Scripture and geared to situations where we need to hear what God is saying to the churches and to us. Above the givens of Scripture, even asking God for his specific plans for us is holding the prophetic phone. To some extent even this spirit of prophecy, this hearing ear, is open to us all, though some specialise in it and can even tell us what they believe is God’s specific plan (Ac.11:27-8), putting the ball in our court—let us judge with much caution. Paul was warned but rightly decided to face it (Ac.21:11-4): advisory, not directive. Each of us can hear from God and speak for God.

## Chapter 7 Salvation and World Religions

### General Theism

Let's look at connecting with deity outside of church and Sinai. Even within paganism there have been songs of great love for deity. About two millennia before Muhammad,<sup>31</sup> the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten (a.k.a. Amenhotep 4), father of Pharaoh Tutankhamen, enjoyed a shortterm triumph over polytheism. In a profound jump to monotheism, he exalted Aten (sun divinity) to chief position then removed all other divinities as accretions. He sang “Your dawning is beautiful on the horizon of heaven / O living Aten, Beginning of Life / When you rise in the eastern horizon of heaven / you fill every land with your beauty / for you are beautiful, great, glittering, high over the earth / your rays, they encompass the lands / even all you have made / You are Ra, and you have carried them all away captive / You bind them by your love / Though you are from afar, your rays are on earth / Though you are on high, your footprints are the day.” A hymn can be a love song. A zealot can be a lover. Many more such love songs predated Akhenaten within polytheistic religions.

Let's look into world religions generally. To me in the '70s having read *How to be a Christian Without Being Religious* (Fritz Ridenour), 'religion' sounded like a dirty word, a man-made word, perhaps a satanic word—is not a partial truth the worst lie? Later I twigged that James commended good *religion* as pleasing to God. Unlike Fritz, James used the common Greek word *thrēskeia* (Jas.1:26-7), and “the word *religion* captures well the meaning of the Greek *thrēskeia*.... The word is not specifically Christian and [was] used widely in Greek religion to denote the reverencing of a deity (or deities)” (Moo 1990:86). In other words, James encouraged inner holiness and helpful community ethics under God.

Quite a bit of Middle Ages monasticism, on the one hand insular in order to be free from the world's evil influence, on the other

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<sup>31</sup> There is evidence that this name postdated an individual named such, but for convenience I shall go with that name.

hand missionised outwards in community service, sharing its light and helping orphans, widows, and other needy people.

Like James it might well have had this text from *Jeremiah* in mind: “[King Josiah] helped those who were poor and needy, so everything went well for him. That is what it means to know [me]’ says Yahweh. ‘But you only look for and think about what you can get dishonestly. You are even willing to kill innocent people to get it. You feel free to hurt people and to steal from them” (NCV: Jr.22:16-7). Our goodness does not make us, as Ridenour said, but it can reveal us. Josiah had known Yahweh; his son Jehoiakim hadn’t.

In the West, quite a bit of religion is nameless, and even as Ridenour did not wish to be called religious, nor too does it. Lewis called the spirit of the age *religion*: “We who defend Christianity find ourselves constantly opposed not by the irreligion of our hearers but by their real religion. Speak about beauty, truth, and goodness, or about God as simply the indwelling principle of these three, speak about a great spiritual force pervading all things, a common mind of which we are all parts, a pool of generalised spirituality to which we can all flow, and you will certainly find interest.

“But the temperature drops as soon as you mention that God has purposes and performs particular actions, does one thing and not another, is concrete, choosing, commanding, prohibiting, with a determinate character. People become embarrassed or angry. Such a conception seems to them primitive, crude, and even irreverent. The popular ‘religion’ excludes miracles...” (Lewis 1947:99—tweaked). Those who oppose Christianity *for the sake of man*, have from God some care for humanity, but foolishly think Christianity, possibly even theism, the problem rather than the solution.

Like shooting a moral arrow to slay the moral bow, like cutting down the moral tree to exalt a moral branch, the West monotonously bangs the drum of Equality and abolishes humanity. Seeking lowest common platitudes in world religions it ditches their demands, yet “distinctiveness is not less important than similarity; a mouse and an elephant can each be described as a four-footed mammal with a nose, ears, and a tail. We wrong the

integrity of Muhammad, the buddha, and Christ, when we reduce them to three holy men who said very much the same" (Ives 48).

World religions do differ, and assessing their unique selling points makes sense. "When I was an atheist I had to try to persuade myself that most of the human race had always been wrong about the question that mattered to them most; when I became a Christian I was able to take a more liberal view. But, of course, being a Christian does mean thinking that where Christianity differs from the other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong. As in arithmetic—there is only one right answer to a sum, and all other answers are wrong: but some of the wrong answers are much nearer being right than others" (Lewis 2002:35).

Does following other religions deny folk salvation after death? John Wesley held that God doesn't penalise Gentiles for not having access to human evangelism and therefore not accepting Christ. He believed it biblical to hope that if they lived up to their common spiritual light (Level 1), separate from any antigodliness around them they would have "another spirit; being taught by God, by his inward voice, all the essentials of true religion" (Sanders 250).

Are most religions islands formed within the lake of Level 1, even as fire ants network to form floating islands? Might these religions at their best be positive? At least some Christian converts appreciate their preconversion religion: "The white man's religion [is] in many respects...better than the religion of my fathers. However, I have always prayed, and I believe that the Almighty has always protected me" (Barrett 1906:1704-5/2001).

### **Hinduism**

In relation to salvation, Hinduism's got a mixed message. For instance, a plus side is hidden in this: "It is not correct to say that the dewdrop slips into the Shining Sea; it is nearer to the truth to speak of the Shining Sea invading the dewdrop. There is no sense of loss but of infinite expansion when, 'foregoing self, the Universe grows I'" (Christmas Humphreys: Chapman 145). Picture water entering a sponge. Admittedly the Hindu picture is after-final-death, but tweak this in Christian terms as an earthly positive of invasion, as

deity indwelling us, and it works. Christian sponges—selves—are enriched, not dissolved, by the water!

Sadly salvation in Hindu heaven is “a condition in which I shall cease to think, to feel as an individual or, indeed to be an individual ...a condition in which I shall cease to be at all” (C E M Joad: Chapman 145). Picture a lava lamp—when is a blob no longer a blob? To Christians, gaining the heavenly positive beyond death is becoming fully our individual selves, as deity intends for us.

Hinduism formally is tolerant, holding that “all religions are equal, but [that] Hinduism is a bit more equal than the rest” (Alexander 178). But its tolerance can kill illusions, which are us virus-ridden people which are but sickly dewdrops from the Shining Sea.

It is worthwhile noting that the term Hinduism is an umbrella term that nowadays covers a lot of very different ideas. It’s “a highly politicized antisecular ‘syndicated Hinduism’ based on the artificial census-derived notion of a ‘Hindu majority’” (Smith 435). Perhaps they of the River Indus once worshipped a Most High until later generations came to conceive of his many descriptions as being many deities.

Westernism tends to think of supernature in terms of being nebulous; Hinduism tends to think of nature in terms of being nebulous, as transient raindrops from the eternal cloud and the dreamworld—our reality—as part of that cloud. It is pantheistic and polytheistic. It says both that everything is God, and that there are ‘gods’ and ‘goddesses’ beyond our count.

However, I don’t wish to get bogged down in tracing its developments, nor to tarry over the undoubted fact that some Hindus are homicidally brutal to Christians-as-Christians. I wish to exhibit some positives in Hinduism, some Godwardness.

*Reincarnation* (transmigration) and *karma* (merit/demerit) are false ideas but offer moral incentives for moral improvement. They work on the picture that godliness of each soul’s life flows through many existences based on their *karma*. The idea is that even bit by bit throughout numerous reincarnations, each individual soul is able to get a little better, even if sometimes getting a little worse,

until one can flee the cycle of reincarnation and return to godhead through *moksha*, an exit door from nature, gaining joy or at least losing sorrow (Alexander 189). As a penalty for getting a little worse your next reincarnation will be to a lower form, and so escape from nature's trauma and illusion will be delayed: Snakes & Ladders.

Within its generalities, three main aspects of an ultimate Oneness (Brahman) are personified into gods. Hindus name these as three (*trimurti*): Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu. Perhaps the most personable concept is Vishnu, deemed a kindly preserver that has become human nine times, and with another time to come (ten avatars—descents). Two big heroes, Rama (Rama-Chandra) and Krishna, are said to be his seventh and eighth avatars. Krishna, the hero of the C1 *Bhagavad Gita*, is considered very personal and a god in his own right.

“Krishna...teaches a path that combines...karma marga...jnana marga ...and bhakti marga. Devotion is the culmination, for even after one has mastered well duty and wisdom, one ‘attains the highest devotion to me,’ says Krishna to his disciple Arjuna, because ‘I love you well’ (*Bhagavad Gita* 18.54,64)” (Smith 831). These three ways are religious rites (*karma marga*), meditation (*jnana marga*), and devotion to a deity (*bhakti marga*). And the greatest of these is salvation through devotion/love. In a sense it’s plunging into beloved deity, and thus becoming one with it.

Personification pictures impersonal reality—power, purity, purpose—manifesting itself through personal forms, and thus allowing a personal response. “The *Bhagavad Gita* speaks of Arjuna seeing in Krishna countless visions of wonder, as Krishna asserts that ‘only by [devotion] can you see me and know me and come to me’... salvation is...a gift from God” (Alexander 192). Such devotion involves ritualism and worship through idols, figures which represent some aspects of God. In a more Christian way, some Hindus believe that lover and beloved continue united as two, rather than the worshipper losing their individual status. Does Hinduism sense the Image of God (Gen.1:27) and its desire to love God? Has it some faint glow?

We should disagree with the theory of reincarnation and associated ideas such as reward/payback according to right/wrong moral choices made in a previous incarnation, but is there not something right in the desire to seek beyond the world? Is there not a strand of real love towards some strand of deity?

### Islam

It has been said that militant Islam is the snake hiding in the grass, and moderate Islam is the grass hiding the snake. There are real concerns. For a realistic pulse on Islam and Muslims, readers can do worse than read Ed Husain's *The Islamist*. Husain's journey was from moderate Islam, to militant Islam, to devotional Islam. The percentage given at the presentation of militant Islam was, I suspect, wildly downgraded, though I accept that militant Islam—often undercover and including *Hizb ut-Tahrir*—is a small minority of a potential army which can be pressganged to fight.

After an act of Islamic terrorism, "...the Hizb's leadership issued a condemnation of what had happened, saying it was a non-violent party. This myth was swallowed by investigators who never really understood the seriousness of the Hizb's form of violence. Even today, a primary reason for Western failure in the War on Terror is this same cause: an innate inability to understand the Islamic psyche" (Husain 153). Ironically Husain had an innate inability to understand the Christian psyche and doctrines, but he did try.

Islam has a very dark side.<sup>32</sup> But my aim isn't to uncover any darker side of adherents and/or of documentation, but to exhibit any

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<sup>32</sup> Besides some rather nasty honour killings—if shame is conceived within a household—let us be aware that “while Muslim terrorists take [the Quran’s verses of violence] literally, and understand that Islam is incomplete without [lesser] Jihad, moderates offer little to contradict them—outside of personal opinion. Indeed, what do they have? Speaking of peace and love may win over the ignorant, but when every twelfth verse of Islam’s holiest book either speaks of Allah’s hatred for non-Muslims or calls for their death, forced conversion, or

flickers of light within, and from a UK perspective I shall dwell a little more on Islam. To the good, Islam denies polytheism, the idea that numerous deities exist.

On the bad, Islam defends Level 2's monopersonal monotheism and attacks Level 3's tripersonal monotheism. It generally confuses heretical tritheism (three deities, three persons) with orthodox trinitarianism (one deity, three persons), and disliking the latter dislikes the idea of deific sonship. If Christianity held that Jesus was a god conceived by God the father and Mary as God the mother, I'd ditch Christianity as rank paganism.

To the good, the terms *Islam* and *Muslim* speak of submission to Allah—to God under his Arabic name. I do not mind the Arabic name for God. I do mind the Islamic definition of that name as monopersonism. Since submission to God is such a good thing, though individually meaningless unless individually desired, I encourage all Christians to be *muslim*, submitted.

As to what's beyond death, Islam biases towards righteous human males as if it's a man's paradise of joyous harems, with peaceful life as we know it only better, and allows for eternal severance from God. "For the unbeliever we have prepared fetters and chains, and a blazing fire. But the righteous shall drink of a cup tempered at the Camphor Fountain, a gushing spring at which the servants of Allah will refresh themselves: they who keep their vows and dread the far-spread terrors of judgment-day; who for love of Allah give sustenance to the poor man, the orphan, and the captive, saying, 'we feed you for Allah's sake only; we seek of you neither recompense nor thanks: for we fear from him a day of anguish and of woe.'

"Allah will deliver them from the evil of that day and make their countenance shine with joy. He will reward them for their steadfastness with robes of silk and the delights of Paradise.

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subjugation, it's little wonder that sympathy for terrorism runs as deeply as it does in the broader community—even if most Muslims prefer not to interpret their personal viewpoint of Islam in this way" ([www.thereligionofpeace.com/pages/quran/violence.aspx](http://www.thereligionofpeace.com/pages/quran/violence.aspx)).

Reclining there upon soft couches, they shall feel neither the scorching heat nor the biting cold. Trees will spread their shade around them, and fruits will hang in clusters over them....They shall be arrayed in fine green silk and rich brocade, and adorned with bracelets of silver. Their lord will give them a pure beverage to drink. Thus you will be rewarded; your endeavours are gratifying to Allah" (Qur'an 76:4-23).

The idea of love for (or at least fear of) Allah, is worth noting, and the encouragement to help the needy. But we might wonder whether if Allah wasn't watching, the poor man might miss out. As the polytheist Hagar discovered, God sees and hears (Gen.16:13—"the god who sees me"). But where is loving as God loves, if our good works are based on self-interest? Islam is right in stressing that Allah has no self-interest, and it does incline towards moral living within community, even if inclining towards bloody battle and international subjugation (doubtless intended for global good) as if God's kingdom is earthly. Yet "Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my kingdom is not of this world'" (NLT: Jhn.18:36).

The idea that 'Isa (Jesus) fought to the death in jihad against Satan, rose victorious into glory having opened up heaven beyond mortal death, and welcomes into his kingdom all who welcome him as messiah, is not welcomed. For in Islam, ultimate salvation is one of individual merit and Allah's mercy and Muhammad's intercessions—but it's good that it emphasises ultimate life.

It rightly says that Allah can't be forced, but it wrongly sets out a misleading pathway for salvation. Its five-pillar steps to salvation are the *Shahada* (affirmation of monotheism and Muhammad as God's main prophet), *Salat* (communal prayer five times a day), *Sawm* (fasting during the daylight hours of the month of Ramadan), *Hajj* (a pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy city), and *Zakat* (giving at least 2½% to the needy). Allah can't be tricked. Islam says that Allah watches how folk live, and that after death they are interrogated by two angels (Munkar and Nakir), "who will examine a person's faith and weigh out the good and bad of one's life" (Smith 527). Personal deed and hope are premium.

Submission is right and proper, but loving God is better. Mainline Islam considers that to Allah, man is but worshipper and servant, not family: shall Allah fellowship with creatures that he created to serve him? Christians say Allah needs neither service nor worship.

Paradise is not pictured in terms of fellowship with Allah. The *Hadith* (various collections of what Muhammad might have said and done)<sup>33</sup> says: “O my servants, you can neither do me any harm nor can you do me any good” (Sahih Muslim, Book 32, Hadith Number 6246), and the Qur'an says, “I created the jinn [spirits] and mankind only that they might worship me. I seek no livelihood from them, nor do I ask that they should feed me” (Qur'an 51:56-7; see Ps.50:12-5).

Christians agree that we cannot harm nor benefit God, who needs no food, but can suggest that he created as creative overflow, sharing his beauty, love, and joy. On fellowship terms, we say that God is the eternal society and has made humanity in his likeness.

Muslim mystics (sufis) take a warmer more Christian approach. They seek to meditate themselves into such fellowship, believing that Allah has a heart to fellowship with man, who can reach the Beloved since he has given us the option to love him. Sufis exist within both sides of Islam's main succession division, that is, the Sunnis and the Shi'a, though Sunnis welcome Sufism more. About 90% of Muslims are Sunni, and 10% are Shi'a. Sunnis emphasise community before philosophy, and Shiites emphasise philosophy before community. Their division began over the question of whether Muslim leadership should be dynastic or non-dynastic. On both sides of that question a godly yearning for God exists.

The Bible presents fallen man as still in God's likeness/image (eg Gen.5:2; 9:6), even if that is but a preliminary likeness compared to

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<sup>33</sup> Islam has varying hermeneutic keys. For example, some take the Qur'an's verses of violence to override the verses of peace, because the violence texts come after the peace texts; some speak of equal weight and balance. Some take the Hadith to be as canonical as the Qur'an; some separate authentic Hadeeth from later, non-authentic ones, and stress that even the authentic need careful interpretation.

Jesus as God's *alēthinos* image (2 Cor.4:4), in whose likeness we ought to be (Rm.8:29). Humanity is in the *Imago Dei* (God's shadow-image). Christians alone are in the *Imago Christi* (enlightened). And ultimately the new humanity will be in the *Imago Dei* (perfect) as Christ alone will have been. Does the Adamic *Imago* account for the search for God, which the Qur'an misses and Sufis follow?

Followers of *Sufism* seek God by seeking to wean themselves off worldliness—so should Christians. Some claim to have broken through to Allah. J N D Anderson suggested that much mysticism is simply seeing God's likeness within, although some could be satanic delusion, and some could be from God (22). Not all agree the methods and results of the Sufis, but is their yearning for divine fellowship wrong? Are they not a case of Muslims affirming Islam's teachings of submission and accountability but seeking to touch God though he slay them?

But from a Christian perspective, even if Sufis are closer to God than other Muslims, the message of Level 3 salvation is still for them, as it was for Cornelius, who even spoke with an angel (Ac.10:36-43). The message of salvation extends far beyond the question of living with God after we die. Anderson claimed that he had “never met a Muslim convert who regards...God [as they] previously sought to worship, as a wholly false god; instead, they are filled with wonder and gratitude that they have now been brought to know...God as he really is, [through] Jesus Christ our Lord” (110).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> This could be based on later philosophical reflection of the question not necessarily asked by all converts from Islam. For instance, in polytheistic terms, the theologically eclectic Mosab Hassan Yousef, contrasted “the god of the Qur'an” (as inspiring terrorism by converting the moderates) to “a god who would help me save others” (12,248). Since he also spoke of “the one true god” (258), his polytheistic language (surprisingly common between those who agree that there is only one god, God) probably means concepts of God, not contrasting gods. That he never went overboard to compare the Islamic and the Christian concepts of God, suggests to me that he was

Likewise Phil Parshall's *The Cross and the Crescent: Understanding the Muslim Heart and Mind*, 2003:27. Islam contains some truth and desire for deific fellowship. Is it a stepping stone to Christ, or a rock that crushes? Let the reader reflect.

### **Buddhism**

I'll be briefer with Buddhism. In disquiet towards the passivism of ancient Hinduism towards social sufferings, Buddhism was born, founded around the philosophy of Siddhartha Gautama (probably born between 624 and 448 BC). He felt that Hinduism lacked neighbourly care. Did he give up the playboy life of wine, women, and song, in order to seek for the meaning of life for himself and for others? Had he a seeking heart, a servant heart? Perhaps.

Buddhism carries the core ideas of enlightenment and impermanence, and its founder is called The buddha (The enlightened one). After many years of affluence followed by years asceticism, he rejected either theism or priestly-theism. Was he an *atheist*? Early Roman Christians were called atheists for rejecting Rome's idea of many gods. Did he merely reject the carrot of buying into heaven, so to speak, *via* priests, instead of by the heart, even as Martin Luther rejected Johann Eck without rejecting heaven?

Gautama's thinking (the Four Noble Truths) was that man's suffering (*dukkha*) was caused by intense desire (*tanha*)—for example gold, glory, and girls—arising out of the will to live and to possess. Kill strong desire, and strong suffering dies, but without craving them do enjoy the gold, glory, and girls, a middle path avoiding self-denial and self-indulgence, leading to a passionless peace called

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not following Anderson's point of common ground. We can *contrast* between an apple and an orange, yet *compare* them as fruit. Yousef might have argued that the contrast is between poisonous and beneficial fruit, though he also praised his father (on "the beautiful [yet blind] side of Islam", 105), a religious founder member of Hamas, as similar in some good ways to Jesus, so implying some commonality.

*Nirvana*. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tm.6:6). Anyone achieving *Nirvana* became a buddha, an enlightened one. According to Buddhism, nirvana is achieved through working oneself out of the cycle of reincarnations. Even if selfhood is lost in nirvana, the basic idea is of an exodus towards a Canaan. Zen-Buddhism, a sub-set which started about a millennium later, aims at concentrated meditation and feelings in order to attain enlightenment—*satori*—here and now. You could say a little bit of Canaan on the exodus to Canaan, Nirvana. So Zen is that little bit closer to Christianity.

The ‘way out’ (exodus) is often called the Eightfold Path. These eight ingredients for proper living may be categorised as three strands: morality (no killing/stealing/lying/abusive-sex/intoxicants), meditation (eg breath control and dismissing mental interruptions), and wisdom (maturing in spiritual insight). To improve their next incarnation, common folk should simply be good.

To reduce desire for monks and nuns, being on the next level up they should renounce family ties and material goods, and live a simple, contemplative life. This could vary from living alone in a forest, to living in a monastery and each morning begging food from the locals, an act to benefit the monk/nun with food, and the giver with good works leading towards better reincarnations—you scratch my back, and enlightenment will scratch yours.

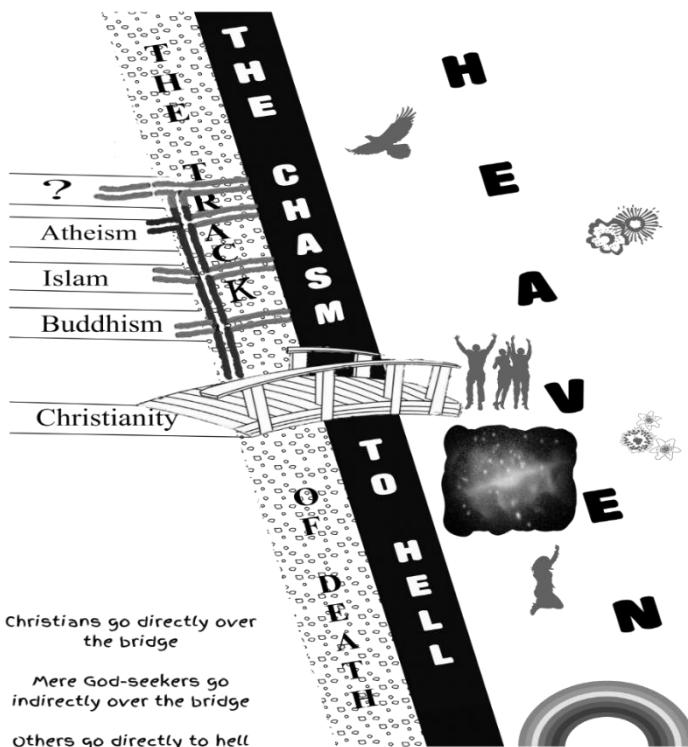
Of the main Buddhist divisions, Theravada and Mahayana, the former demands a more severe life towards buddhahood without aid from temples and deity, while the latter has arguably a bigger vision of deity and of helping others. Mahayanans give greater weight than Theravadins do to compassion, though they somewhat offset this by reckoning human reality to be less real than Theravadins suggest. Both divisions are effectively on a spiritual quest, unhappy with the merely secular life.

“Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honour at God’s right hand” (NLT: Col.3:1). Beyondness is a central tenet of Christianity, and sometimes put in terms of christlikeness. Some

Buddhists believe that nothing that is uniquely 'us' ultimately exists, while others hold that individual consciousness ultimately exists, though dependent on a higher reality—the higher affirms the lower. But a fuzzy desire for beyondness can channel through.

Below I picture individuals as able to walk through non-Christian world religions, either into the eternal chasm, or onto the same bridge which Christians will cross. Remember that although once upon a time there were no Christians, surely the bridge has always been. But although their religions can save them unto godliness, they do not save them from the chasm and into heaven.

Does God ignore any on the fallen road who die seeking the bridge, who search for one who didn't search for them? Might some of their teachings not have developed through likeminded people seeking God's face, even though conflicting and confusing teachings have developed alongside the germ of truth?



## Chapter 8 Salvation at Ensoulment

### Perambulation

By ensoulment I mean that point in time when any *person* begins: at conception; at heartbeat (about month 1); at pain (at perhaps month 3); at birth (about month 9)? Do people who die in or before infancy all end up in heaven, or all in hell, or is there some filtering of fate? This is a touchy subject, and for some a painful one if they have lost a child. There are various ideas about what happens to people who have died in infancy or have been aborted before infancy.

I have little sympathy with the snakelike abortion industry which peddles the line that a woman's body *is her own*, while hiding the idea that each unborn child's body *is its own*, even though they reside snugly within their mother's body, and might live to lie snugly within her arms. On abortion-death, some say that nature aborts, so why shouldn't we? That's like saying that some drivers kill pedestrians *by accident*, so why shouldn't we *on purpose*?

The ancient oath of Hippocrates put principle before profit: "Nor shall any one's entreaty prevail upon me to administer poison to anyone; neither will I counsel anyone to do so. Moreover, I will give no sort of medicine to any pregnant woman, with a view to destroy the child." Hippocrates renounced the twin evils of euthanasia and abortion. Those industries renounce him on the grounds that mechanisms for abortion and euthanasia have improved.

Many professions, having been indoctrinated thus with abortion philosophy, sincerely resist any undoctrination for a reason shared with another issue: "Recognizing the magnitude of harm caused by unintentional intravascular injections may evoke feelings of guilt, shame, and responsibility, among healthcare professionals. The discomfort associated with this realization can naturally lead to an unconscious resistance in accepting the prevalence and consequences of accidental intravascular injections" (Girardot 120).

Yes, recognition can be painful, but nonrecognition can be more so, for unenlightened we inflict yet more pain, not less. We should

see that we begin *before* our birth—ensoulment—and factor this insight into an inclusive framework of everlasting life.

I have much sympathy for women who can honestly stand before the lord as subjectively innocent, even though they are objectively guilty in our sociopathic slaughter of innocents (Rm.14:23).

I have much sympathy for women who have innocently swallowed the misinformation which floods out to bolster the industry, to keep politicians in paid jobs, and to generally promote hedonism especially for men to drink their wine without bothering to pay.

I have much sympathy for women who are cruelly arm-twisted by tyrannous men to abort, men—usually merely *partners*—who say *My baby, my right*. It is in fact no-one's moral right, but whenever and however we die, I deem the human unborn to be covered from ensoulment by the same salvation principles as us born. Abortion does not damn to hell, and God's grace is greater than man's sins.

I have sympathy for husbands raised under western SexEd which paints preborn babies as mere nonhuman blobs of sometimes annoying material, who press their wives to abort their child. They are misled as to what humanity is.

With SexEd, “the real goal is to change students’ attitudes—put bluntly, to brainwash them with the vision of the anointed, in order to supplant the values they have been taught at home.... Only in the light of this agenda does it make sense that so-called ‘sex education’ should be advocated to take place throughout the school years—from kindergarten to college—when it could not possibly take that much time to teach basic biological or medical information about sex. What takes that long is a constant indoctrination in new attitudes.” (Sowell 19-20) Some need deprogramming.

The new covenant documents do not specifically cover abortion and infancy death, but do cover underlying principles. Had Paul been asked about this he might have prayerfully considered this. But not all is revealed, and perhaps to some questions the questioned questions, *What is that to you?* God has inspired essential documentation for us all. He also inspired nonessential documentation, useful straw, so to speak, some of which we have

and some of which we don't. All were breathed by his spirit into the needs of early days, but like the scattered seed (Lk.8:5), many writings fell on the way and were eaten by the birds of Rome, so to speak, destroyed in the Jewish-Roman War of 66-73. Even some dominical data did not become canonical (Jhn.21:25). But the core new covenant revelation has found its way into the Bible.

The canon we do have offers much understanding beyond the basics, but even had we everything which the canonical apostles and prophets and teachers wrote, we would still not have more than a partial image (1 Cor.13:12). With what we have, some basic systems arose among some influential thinkers, systems sometimes mulled over and adjusted by later thinkers. In short, for this question we must speculate from limited data as we seek to understand God's mind on this.

### *Sola Fide Yields to Grace?*

Had we personal faith at ensoulment? Over many years I remained puzzled by the evangelical given that ultimate life *only* came through one's personal faith—that only Christians held tickets to heaven—yet that unasked for, tickets *could* and probably *would* be given to those who have died *if* they were unable to have personal faith if due to age (unevangelisable infants) but *not* if due to wrong location (unevangelised adults). I think that if we biblically define our words, we can happily exclude *all* the unevangelised from the gospel as being essential for Level 3 life, but nonessential for Level 4 life. Okay, then what would be essential for the latter?

I hold that Level 4 salvation, the postmortal stage of eternal life, has never been limited to the likes of Abraham, Ethnic-Israel, or the church. I hold that globally accessible ultimate life (GAUL)—though it *might* be universal, interplanetary—has always been.

Have you read John Sanders? Like myself, he spent decades trying to answer big questions. I should perhaps point out that for better or worse he achieved some controversy in the Open God debate, an issue about sovereignties and omniscience, perhaps bought into to help explain GAUL partly by ditching election. I don't agree with him on that tangent, but his 1994 book is very worthwhile,

though it lacks depth both *apropos* Annihilationism and on a way forward as to how ultimate life impacts people who die in infancy. Have you read Don Carson? Having benefited greatly from his 1996 book *infra*, it grieves me that he misdirected some incisive arguments against Sanders. Sanders had made a good presuppositional case, but he did lack analysis between *immediate* and *ultimate* life. Arguing against Sanders is not always arguing against inclusivism, or to put it better, against in exclusivism.

- On Tts.2:11: I agree with Carson that Paul didn't mean global throughout history and peoples. I disagree with Carson/Sanders that it was about ultimate salvation. (Carson 1996:288)
- Jhn.14:6/Ac.4:12: I agree with Carson that we do need to know the saviour to know salvation. I disagree with Carson/Sanders that it was about ultimate salvation. (304)
- Rm.10:9-10: I agree with Carson that the positive that all who do thus will gain, prefers the negative that all that don't do thus will lose. I disagree with Carson/Sanders that salvation here is ultimate/ontological instead of immediate/epistemological. (312-3)
- I somewhat agree with Carson that inclusivists underplay the object of faith. But *pace* Carson, they can hold that while Christian salvation totally demands faith in Christ as its object, ultimate salvation simply but totally demands faith in God as its object. (296)

I am an evangelical. I affirm God's wrath, his needed intervention, his inclusive grace (and through evangelism exclusive grace), the spiritual necessity of our inclusive faith (and through evangelism exclusive faith), and I think ultimate damnation beyond redemption by God rejecters. As regards people in infancy, Carson noted his own tendency not to take the exclusivism of the Lausanne Covenant as inflexibly as Carl Braaten said it demanded, such as an Augustinian ruling out of ultimate life for all who die in infancy. On infancy, both Carson and Sanders indicated that opinions are divided both within exclusivism and inclusivism (Carson 1996:286).

On this, many evangelicals quietly bury *sola fide* under *sola gratia*, thus denying *sola fide*. Combining the strengths of inclusivism and exclusivism, in exclusivism rules out exceptions and highlights the global essentials of faith and grace in *all* spiritual salvation.

Here I downplay the term *infants* as carrying emotional baggage, clouding a doctrine about *people*. We can overlook that infants are people, either because they are significant (cute, needy, ours, sinless, vulnerable), or insignificant (irrelevant for now, messy, not my friends, pre-intelligent, unproductive). As regards eternity, they are people, as are you and I, and their ultimate destiny is of equal weight—no more, no less. As regards being people, their equal treatment and opportunity must be just, if God is just. Or why not, you ask, merciful instead of just? Grace, sure, but we must still come back to justice. In the name of justice, why should special grace towards people in infancy, be withdrawn from people post-infancy?

Let's take two little children, John and Jane. Should John, dying a day, a minute, a second before *moral accountability* (Is.7:16) before repentance is needed, therefore have ultimate life? Should Jane his twin sister, dying a day, a minute, a second after moving into moral accountability, therefore be ultimately damned if she hadn't repented her first and only sin? John's unfair advantage; Jane's unfair disadvantage? If John had lived that extra minute, would his *choice* have been God or self? If Jane had lived a couple more minutes, might she have repented (Mt.21:29)?<sup>35</sup>

And this is another big issue—if folk seek heaven, do they get God thrown in, or if they seek God, do they get heaven thrown in? If it

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<sup>35</sup> On heaven and hell, C S Lewis pictured a low intelligence student who would fail no matter how many more *chances* they were given (1972:112). In education, underlying intelligence is key. Lewis believed that all adults get a fair chance of heaven or hell, irrespective of when they die, but that the ultimate teacher knows when it's pointless to give more *chances*. I speak not of chances, but of each underlying heart being key, the ultimate judge judging each heart irrespective of mortal chances: innate spiritual orientation.

is not God they truly seek, is it fully heaven to have him—as unloved Love—there? Girls, the guy loves you but you don't love him, so do you really wish to live in the same house? Guys, turn that around and answer the same question. What's heaven if you don't enjoy the company? Eternal torment?

What of denominations which say that water-baptism is a rite essential for ultimate salvation, perhaps that sprinkling infants is that baptism? What value do they say water-baptism has, if infant people who die unbaptised, can have ultimate life? Evangelicals tend to say that personal Jesus-focused faith is essential for ultimate life. What value do they say personal Jesus-focused faith has, if infants who die without it can have ultimate life?

Can we biblically accept that people who die without such water-baptism or personal faith—as did the Chinese who died before Christ—might have ultimate life? Can we say that God sovereignly elects to automatically give his gift of ultimate life to all who die in infancy, and say without batting an eye that God sovereignly elects not to automatically give his gift of ultimate life to all who die beyond infancy? What of human sinfulness and human choice?

Sanders 1994 ends with a note on this theme: “the thorny issue of the salvation and damnation of...infants who die [lacks] consensus. Serious theological reflection is yet needed on this topic” (305). It raises deep hamartiological, soteriological, and ethical, questions.

### *A Short History of Damnation*

An early idea developed that generally around the world, whether by Adam's sin or by adamic nature, each unborn or born child was damned to perdition, yet if they grew into moral accountability and chose Christ, they would ultimately be saved. This idea seems to have existed alongside an earlier idea that unevangelised people of moral accountability could choose God and ultimately be saved (eg Justin Martyr and Irenaeus).

You can see how within such thinking, one might wonder whether there were any exceptions to the idea of infant damnation, seemingly assumed by Origen and Cyprian of Carthage. I lack the

expertise to trace through all the developments, but a rough sketch should surely include Augustine of Hippo, who “has the distinction of being the first theologian to teach positively the damnation of all unbaptized infants”, though to milder hell than had they committed sins (Sanders 291-2).

At this idea, Pelagius raised his hands in horror: God wouldn’t consign anyone to hell at any level without them having had a chance to repent. A midway alternative is known as Limbo, a popular unofficial modifier of Augustinianism. Both Augustine, and Pelagius who is often assumed to have been a dog with a bad name, with some support from Ambrose, made logical conclusions—granted certain assumptions.

The idea of water-baptism and regeneration being two sides of an event, was sometimes applied to infants as if some kind of insurance policy, such as a deal midway between heaven and hell. But the idea of just letting—dare we say *sin’s incurable lepers*—contaminate heaven with their contaminating sinfulness and unrepented sin (if any), seemed too bad to contemplate.

In the West, the control beliefs in Roman Catholicism, 1# that each damned person is self-damned, and 2# that all have sufficient grace to choose their ultimate destiny, made way for Hincmar of Rheims about 400 years later, to throw into the equation some salvation hope for even infants of pagans: viz that God counts as water-baptised any who would-have-wished-to-have-been-water-baptised—a faith welcome? At a pinch let’s call this a predilection, a predisposition towards God. (I came to a predispositionalism independently.) Rome allows a range of conflicting ideas, but some kind of softer Augustinianism is favoured.

Some who downrate water-baptism say that infants of Bible-believing Christians have preferential treatment, and have even been elected to it (so Zwingli). Such as the C17 Synod of Dort, which twisted three core proof texts here, viz Gen.17:7 which was about earthly, not heavenly, life; Ac.2:39 which simply spoke of a continuing offer (not guarantee) of heavenly life; and 1 Cor.7:14 which declared both children and unbelieving spouses equally

holy and equally not guaranteed heavenly life—it would be unfair if it did (Lv.19:15; Gal.2:6). Did Dort wish to prove its wish to believe?

In fact, the general position had been that people who died in or before infancy, died in sin and so just shy of heaven, even if God softened their everlasting fate—the more so or at least so, if they were fortunately of Christian parentage.<sup>36</sup> After all, presumably they had neither been personally able to sin nor to repent. A general sea-change occurred in the C17, namely a presumption that all who died in their tender ages, would be granted heaven.

Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716), an outstanding genius, rocked the common boat. If God is goodness, then even if he fully damns unrepentant sinners he'll fully save all infants, for unsinning they are all innocent. This wasn't a new deal, but his clever packaging sold it to the European market—trickle down. I'm sure and certain that neither water-baptism nor Calvinist election are relevant if infants as infants of whatever stock and condition, will be granted salvation to heaven. But I'm neither sure nor certain that it's such "a sure and certain hope" as touted at some funerals.

Arminianist John Wesley came to hold this infant-universalism, though if infants don't choose, it conflicts with Arminianism's control belief of individual faith-choice. Does Arminianism only kick in with the age of moral accountability? Even some Calvinists like to think that Calvin heeded Zwingli's hunch, that all who die in infancy are in fact among the elect. Mightn't their death in infancy even prove God's especial love for them in removing them from the anguish of facing a sinful world?<sup>37</sup> But while we can say that if they never sinned in any individual act they never needed repentance of any sinful act, haven't they any unresolved bias towards sin, inner contamination? In Adam all die.

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<sup>36</sup> This makes some sense if we assume that Sinai gave ultimate life to its infants. However, Sinai did not give ultimate life to young or old.

<sup>37</sup> But especial love is a theoretical problem, if God has no favouritism.

One way or another, Calvinism can nicely deal with infancy death: God elects some people for ultimate life, and all he elects, and none others, shall be saved—he is sovereign. Of these, either all or some who die in infancy he transfers to heaven from their human infancy, and the rest he transfers from their more mature years.

By holding to limited atonement, Calvinism of course poses a general ‘problem’ of dual election: Why does God choose to damn some (or at least leave damned), especially if those saved and those damned are all without difference totally depraved at ensoulment? Is salvation a lucky dip? Could he have picked Hitler not Hakes?

Also, does God’s sovereignty determine which infants will die through the malice of others? Though perfectly understandable as a verbal letting off of steam, did the psalmist’s itch to bash babies’ brains in, indicate Yahweh’s election of Babylonian infants? A fuzzy kind of universalism appears to be established thinking in the West, but is the salvation of all infants who die, an idea held mainly for sentimental reasons (Sanders 303)?

Martin Luther asked, If the pope can release souls from purgatory, why not release all for sheer benevolence rather than charge for the privilege (Thesis 82)? A similar question is raised about God’s unopposable election to life—if all are equal with absolutely no spiritual difference, why not equally save all if he saves any?

Covering this and the wider question of our future, some other ideas have been around a long time. Such as...

- Universalism: Gaining everlasting life is possible in mortal life and requires hearing the Evangel: “No one can have [Christian] faith without hearing the message about Christ” (CEV: Rm.10:17). But since not all hear the Evangel before they die, since God is love he must allow everlasting life to be gained after death. And surely no human being—perhaps not even Satan—can withstand the fount of love everlasting. In short, surely all rebellious yet rational self-aware beings will eventually be won over by Love. God wills to save all (1 Pt.3:9; 1 Tm.2:4). God’s will will be done.
- Annihilationism: Gaining everlasting life seems only

possible in mortal life and requires hearing the Evangel: “No one can have [Christian] faith without hearing the message about Christ” (CEV: Rm.10:17). But since not all hear the Evangel before they die, then since God cannot offer heaven once the Gate has been shut, because God is love he will not allow everlasting torment. In short, after death sinners shall cease to exist, cease to suffer. “There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than [hell], if it lay in my power” (Lewis 1972:106).

From an Evangelical perspective, both the above work on some common assumptions, such as ① the necessity of human point-of-decision repentance, ② God being love itself, and ③ God being fair, proportional. They have some differences, such as whether we as souls are intrinsically immortal. Annihilationism says that God withdraws—or in the variant of conditional-immortalism merely withdraws—soul-immortality to all who die in sin’s domain.

- I discount annihilationism: I hold that postmortal-hell is everlasting bearable and our souls eternally immortal.
- I discount universalism: I do not hold that love will woo beyond death until all the ‘children’ have ‘come home’; I hold that the ‘children’ come home (heaven or hell) at death.
- It’s not that they are not interesting. It’s simply that I do not see a point in holding either as a way to square the circle of God’s love and human suffering. Inclusivism and bearability, cover all bases.

Assuming the imperative of point-of-decision repentance, some other Christian ideas suggest that that point is offered at, or after, death, with everlasting decisions either for hell or for heaven. Again, I do not see a reason to go there.

Stephen T Davis acknowledged that “there are NT texts that can be taken to imply that hell is an act of vengeance or retribution on sinners (Mt.5:22,29; 8:12; 10:15; 2 Ths.1:6-9; Heb.2:2-3; 10:28-31; 2 Pt.2:4-9,12-3). Some even seem to suggest degrees of punishment

corresponding to degrees of guilt (Mt.11:22-4; Lk.12:47-8; 20:47)".<sup>38</sup> He reasoned that hell was drab, meaningless, and self-inflicted confinement, "separation from God [who is] the source of true love, joy, peace, and light. It is not a place of agony, torment, torture, and utter horror.... But there is no deep or ultimate joy there and I believe its citizens are largely miserable. To be apart from the source of love, joy, peace, and light, is to live miserably." He affirmed the ideas of Bearable Hell, and freedom to choose between "living in God's presence [or] living in God's absence." A perpetual underlying remorse, married to a perpetual underlying rejection of God with no desire for divorce.

When we speak of Bearable Hell, we speak of hell as unbearable only from heaven's perspective. Now Augustine took a harder line than the mild stance of the previous majority, but influenced perhaps by Mt.10:15/Lk.10:12, suggested lesser suffering for infants who died without being *water-baptised*.

Later Peter Abelard suggested that the unbaptised yet unguilty escape positive pain (*poena sensus*) but in hell's mists miss positive pleasure (*poena damni*). And Thomas Aquinas taught perfect human happiness short of heaven for such souls—indeed forgetfulness of heaven and unawareness of hell: a blessed amnesia away from God. Is dark pleasure hell to heaven's pleasure?

Though I am not a Calvinist, I agree with John Calvin that election is from ensoulment. He postulated that God makes that election; I postulate that our nature makes that election: we shall dwell according to our nature. I do not postulate that God sovereignly chooses from equally depraved sinners—a dual election lucky dip.

I postulate that we are self-elected by our core predisposition at ensoulment, and will in terms of Mt.24 categories, either be Sheep in a joyful heaven, or Goats everlasting in a bearable hell. I underline that by hearing and heeding the Evangel, only mortal

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<sup>38</sup> <https://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil3600/Davis.pdf> tweaked.

Sheep can join Christ's flock. In short, that our ultimate destiny will be unchanged whether we die before or beyond our infancy.

Do I hold John Calvin's idea, *once-saved-always-saved* (OSAS)? I hold that at the Ultimate level *if-saved-always-saved* (ISAS). But I hold that at the Christian level we are *not* if-saved-always-saved. Thinking in ultimate terms and within Calvinism, Wayne Grudem rejecting the possibility of apostacy, flagged up the warnings of Heb.6 & 10 as warnings that only bogus or borderline converts who reject Christianity, will be damned (Grudem 796-802). At the Christian level, departing from John and Wayne, my *Revisiting the Pilgrim's Progress* (2021:36-7) reads thus:

“I now am what I once was not,” responded the old man, “for once, having professed the faith, I was keen to grow. Yet shallow in submission was I and soon gave up, once the going got tough. Now I wither alone, unable to free myself from my cage. Having left the ship of salvation, the captain will not permit me to re-embark. I confess my own failings. I looked for an easy and enjoyable life, without conflict or clamour; hearing and heeding the Book seemed pointless. Alas, I grieved the heavenly dove, and he has flown from me; I invited the crow of hell, and he has come to roost. The Book sternly says that none who crucify the crucified one, shall be spared: I have spurned the king’s son; insulted the king’s agent; the king’s anger encages me in iron.”

Aside, Christian asked whether the old man had any hope of grace. “Alas,” said Interpreter, “he has no hope of grace. Natheless, grace has hope for him. So there is hope that he will turn and be restored as a pilgrim. But he can hold no hope, while he believes in no hope. As to the cage, why, it was wrought by the futility of his own mind, not by the king’s anger—for this man in his anger misjudges his judge.

“To be sure his first faith—and some would deny him that—proved faithless. But as to the Book, it proclaims captivity to such as he, only for as long as they choose to continue in their folly, insulting the prince in public. Yet affronted grace is not fickle, and stands ever ready to raise the fallen, if they truly repent. However, grace raises this warning, that they who violate the covenant with their lord who

## Salvation at Ensoulment

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needs them not, do but exile and doom themselves. In folly and despair, it is this man who denies himself repentance, yet blames the denial on the king."

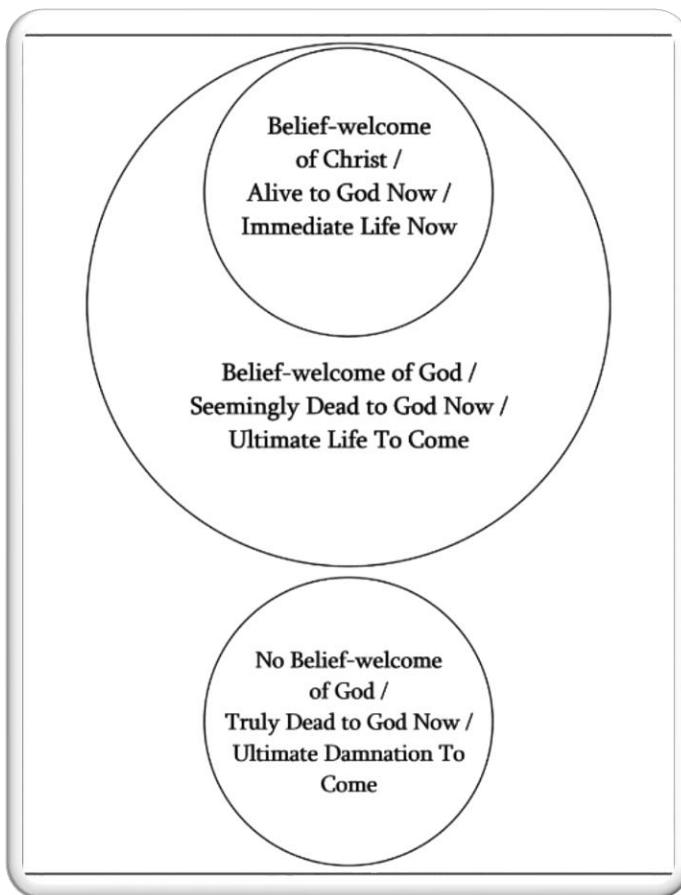
In short regarding Christian salvation, adults can swing through the revolving doors in and out and in and out *ad nauseam*, but regarding Ultimate salvation, from ensoulment whenever and however we are killed or if we simply die, we are primarily judged on whether at our core fixity we would, or would not be, with deity. Choices made are here irrelevant: we will be granted our nature. This Level 3 to Level 4 distinction, I call *inexclusivism*.

This simplified chart seeks to show some main idea about ultimate salvation even for people who die in the womb.

	Can people who die in infancy...				
	choose God... in infancy?	after death?	be damned for... sinfulness?	sins?	Destination at death?
Augustinianism	✗	✗	✓	✗	If baptised, heaven, otherwise mild hell
Annihilationism	✗	✗	✓	✗	Extinction
Pelagianism	✗	✗	✗	✗	Heaven
Limited Reincarnationism	✗	✓	✗	✓	Human rebirth
Postmortal Evangelism	✗	✓	✗	✓	Heaven or Hell
Universalism	✗	✓	✗	✗	Eventually Heaven
Predilectionism	✓	✗	✓	✗	Heaven or Hell

## Chapter 9 End Game for All

My road to in exclusivism (and predilectionism/predispositionalism), has been a long one. Born within the largest circle, I became a Christian in the Salvation Army in tender years, called but not committed, and thankfully under little parental pressure to attend church. It was the perimeter life of the inner circle. Only in my early teens did I choose Christian circles, imbibing Arminianist Evangelicalism's standard framework, which is that by prochoice, any prolife person can gain ultimate life but only through choosing Christ. I was content. My simplified illustration here is where I have uneasily journeyed to. Picturing it has taken decades.



Inexclusivism connects evangelism to a this-life benefit of salvation, sees *belief* as *welcome*, and affirms that ultimate life has always been globally accessible. To some extent, inexclusivism is conveyed through many a word and many a biblical setting, and we should always consider the setting and agent of salvation talk.

The OT has a hidden undercurrent of global and unfocused salvation that eternity will clarify. When Ethnic-Israel was told that Yahweh “was concerned about them and had seen their misery, they bowed down and worshipped” (NIV/NLT: Ex.4:31): that was salvation. When Ethnic-Israel began the Sinai exodus, that was salvation. When Ethnic-Israel began to control Canaan, that was salvation. When Ethnic-Israel had its borders secured, that was salvation. When it met at the tent, later at the temple, that was salvation. When it heard and heeded its true prophets, that was salvation. Yet it was *covenant* salvation, not *ultimate* salvation.

As R E O White underlined concerning the wide and common word group around *yāša'*, the key idea has been broad. We could look at other Hebrew salvation-type words, such as *mālaṭ* in its niphil form to *slip away*, *escape*, and in its piel form to *deliver*, *save*. “In the LXX *sōzō* translates no less than 15 different Hebrew verbs” (Colin Brown: VanGemeren G5392 [*sōzō*]), and it’s good to look at the range of meanings in the NT from the noun *sōtēria* (salvation) and its verb *sōzō* (save).

The NT has a big tie-in with the OT by the very name *Jesus*, besides themes such as exodus/eisodus. The OT was the prophecy of salvation level 3; the NT was the fulfilment. Contexts for the salvation word-pool include such as saving from sin’s power (Mt.1:21), saving from physical death (14:30), ethnic deliverance (Lk.1:71), physical healing (6:9), protection from torment (Jhn.12:27), gaining biblical sight (Ac.2:40), and spiritual health (Rm.5:10). And salvation into Christ’s family has an ongoing aspect of development, *theosis*, divinisation, Christ-likeness. All too easily the evangelical mind—as had mine—can read into any salvation text, the idea of *ultimate* life. *Salvation* is a big wide word, and we all need big wide glasses.

### Dropping in on Cornelius

Looking at a broad meaning of salvation words shows us that human evangelism can have a saving purpose, even if its beneficiaries already yet unknowingly have their ticket to ultimate life. R C H Lenski asked some good questions: If Cornelius' pagan convictions had been enough for salvation, why had he sought the synagogue, and if the synagogue had been enough for salvation, why had he sought Peter? But what is salvation, here?

Perhaps on the faulty assumption that Sinai offered ultimate life, both Martin Luther and John Calvin held that "since Cornelius was a 'God-fearer', he would have been saved even if he had died before Peter arrived" (Sanders 65). What they rightly meant was, saved *ultimately*. What they missed, was the level of salvation through Peter being *Christian* life (Rm.10:14), which included assurance that God's forgiven us into his family in the here and now (Jhn.17:3), and inclusion now excludes exclusion beyond death. Cornelius, while not lacking Level 4, nevertheless lacked Level 3 prior to the Evangel, a blessing for which Peter was summoned.

Calvin noted that "man's acceptance with God is twofold" (*Institutes* 3.17.4). I agree, but I disagree with Calvin's presuppositions that Cornelius had already bought into Sinai, and that Sinai bestowed *ultimate* life. Cornelius had not totally committed to Sinai—Godfearers were a step shy of that—and there is no teaching that Sinai had ever possessed any ticket to heaven. If it had, why would Naomi have sought to turn her daughters-in-law *away* from Sinai? If the new covenant had, why would Peter have dallied around ten years before bringing its good news to pagans? Had he blood on his hands for those he could have offered heaven's key to, but who had died unevangelised so unsaved in those years (Ezk.33:6)?

Calvin badly wished to believe, and no doubt did believe, that a limited offer of ultimate atonement had at least incorporated Sinai before the cross, extending back even to Abraham, writing off the unelected masses by the magic word *sovereignty*. But to argue that circumcision was entry into Sinai, both ignores that women were not circumcised (yet in) and that God-fearers, unlike proselytes,

were not circumcised. The Circumcision Party's teaching of limited atonement, was upset by Peter and Paul (Ac.11:1).

I welcome Calvin's support simply for the shared position that, let's say a ticket-to-heaven, could be held before the Evangel. However, the ticket it offered was a ticket-to-Christianity (Ac.11:14), a mortal level of heaven. Calvin, wrestling with a puzzle, lacked an exegetical key buried under layers of tradition.

The Evangel is Good News. God has instituted evangelists (specialists) and evangelism (each Christian is part of evangelism). The speciality is listed as a Christ-given task (Eph.4:11), all facets of Christ whom every Christian has. The saving role they play is fundamental in folk calling for the lord's salvation, for "how...can [people] call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" (NIV: Rm.10:14).

It helps to understand if we see that the *they* being spoken about to Gentile Christians, are the *they* of Ethnic-Israel, whom Paul desperately yearned to enter the messianic community (Rm.10:1): see the expression *they* in vv2-4. "Not all the Israelites accepted the good news" (interpretively, the NIV: 16). Grammatically, v14 is about hearing messiah, not simply hearing *about* him (Morris 1988:389-90): even Abraham had only heard *about* messiah's *dawning* (messianic hope). Since Paul's context was about preaching, evangelism, we can reasonably conclude that he meant that in true preaching anyone listening can hear messiah.

Is the Evangel Bad News to Christians? For aren't we damned if we don't preach? I used to hear warnings that if we Christians didn't evangelise we would have the blood of the damned on our hands—it could even seem that we'd be ultimately damned if we didn't, damned for damning! A bit like "I am doomed", the CEV's take on Paul's woe if he preached not the Christian news (1Cor.9:16). The guilt trip was especially keen from *Ezekiel*—taken out of context.

Ezekiel described his prophetic job as being like a solitary soldier on sentry duty at the main gate under attack (Ezk.33). If the sentry

ignored his people and they died unwarned, their literal blood would metaphorically be on his hands. If they ignored his warning and died, he would be innocent. Evangelicalism has misused this to literally put the fear of God into lackadaisical Christians.

However in Ezekiel's context, surely the loss was not ultimate but covenantal? Would Ezekiel miss ultimate life by failing in a task? Would Yahweh permit any Judahite to lose eternity simply because a prophet failed to warn them that international punishment was about to follow national disobedience? Would all non-Israelites lose out on ultimate life because no prophet called on *them* to repent? By heeding Jonah, the nasty Ninevites didn't gain ultimate life, but they did keep mortal life. Having feared their redemption, Jonah hadn't wished to warn them. When I saw that the ultimate destiny of others didn't rest on my shoulders, I was relieved!

"They that have understanding in themselves are best. They who walk with the wisdom of the wise are good. They who know neither, nor will be taught by the wise, are naught" (*Hesiod's Works and Days*, lines 293-7, c.700 BC). I grieve that in the West, many are either taught that there is no health—and so remain sickly—or taught that they are healthy, and so despise those who are healthy.

- Some know and know they know: they are wise, follow them.
- Some know but don't know that they know: they are asleep, awaken them.
- Some don't know and know they don't know: they are open, teach them.
- "Some don't know but don't know that they don't know: they are fools, shun them. Let us seek wisdom.

Eternity will reveal who have been wise, but speaking not about ultimate life salvation, it was reasonable for Paul to say that the salvation of *knowing* Christ, Christian revelation in the Yeshuic Covenant, was only enabled through those who had already come to know him: "...it is a beautiful sight to see even the feet of someone coming to preach the good news" (CEV: Rm.10:15). Nowadays even the internet can be our feet, our evangelical footprint.

Good news is a beautiful sight indeed. Release from the penalty and power of sin was one big possibility opened up by Christ. By Christ we have been saved from the penalty of sin, we are being saved from the power of sin, and we shall be saved from the presence of sin. Good News indeed. A big theme of covenant was knowing it—*You shall know that I am Yahweh*. Salvation comes in many ways, shapes, and sizes. Salvation offers the joy of *knowing* God's forgiveness, and the direct *knowledge* of him by each one who bows before him (Jhn.16:27).

As it had been to Isaiah, to Paul the evangel was a focusing lens, yet many (as in Isaiah's prophetic eye on Babylonian Release) prefer the blindness of their imaginations, their idolatry, the short-sightedness of their culture's religion. At kiddie level, George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblins* made the point that it is unreasonable, merely on the basis of someone being your mother, to believe your mother, since not all mothers are truthful—indeed not all know the truth. Judge people as people, not as relationships. At another level, perhaps MacDonald was saying that whatever our *mother* religion, it being *ours* does not make it true. How eagerly we defend what is ours, irrespective of logic! As with even exuberant church prophecies, “examine everything carefully, and hang on to what is good” (CEB: 1 Ths.5:20-1).

Sanders 1994 has the sad story about Mrs. Rachel Lynde. Her head was a little hollow, and she preferred the idea that the countless unevangelised will waste in hell—since evangelism is essential for heaven—to the idea that countless dollars are wasted in evangelism—since evangelism is nonessential for heaven. Would we, like her, write off people rather than write off money?

But God rest her soul, may she rest assured that even *if* ultimate life has always been globally accessible, gospel evangelism is *not* wasted, since evangelism adds unique content in this life even if nonessential for the next. What has Christ's command has Christ's blessing. It is basic to *Trust and obey*, but better to *Understand and obey*. Inclusivism holds that human evangelism acts as the only door into knowledge of the greatest kingdom level on Earth,

pictured elsewhere as spiritual birth into an individualism which was unknown even among the righteous of Ethnic-Israel.<sup>39</sup>

It's a knowledge base, a spiritual identification, a solidarity, an insight, deep joy. But at its most basic, if human evangelism is the essential door to ultimate life, then prior to human evangelism there was no such door. Yet in fact even in Isaiah's day, the *good news (evangel)*, as in Rm.1:16<sup>40</sup> as a Yahweh Day was proclaimed, and Isaiah lamented its low uptake (Rm.10:15-6).

Isaiah's evangel was not Christian evangel—the message of the cross—though it had prophesied the true evangel as Isaiah's temple had prophesied the true temple. In its immediate context of cultural rescue, it was a call back to its level of Yahwism, which was then the highest level of divine life, which *Hebrews* says we mustn't go back to. Going into Egypt was good in Jacob's days. Going back to Egypt was bad in Joshua's days. Egypt was good, yet Sinai was better, and Yeshua is best. Isaiah today might lament at just how many Christians seem uninterested in Christ and regress!

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<sup>39</sup> If for some it functions as their door into ultimate life itself, then we would again be in the puzzle about fairness for those circumstantially outside of its range—postcode salvation.

<sup>40</sup> Incidentally, in *To the Jew First or to the Jew at Last* (2014), Antoine X J Fritz, a former Jews-for-Jesus worker, argued that Rm.1:16's *prōton* meant 'initially', not the ambivalent 'first'. Covenantally, the embryonic gospel was initially to the former twelve-tribed Israel. But Paul probably had in mind the birthed gospel in C1 evangelism being tactically aimed initially towards ethnic-Jews, who had a covenant-background offering ingredients ready to bake the formative Christian cake (as did Paul: Gal.5:11), though some sought to bake it into a Sinai cake (Gal.2:12). Like Paul focusing church-planting in big cities not rural villages, it made tactical sense to develop the church with insights already in place within the tanak, apostles presumably content in the knowledge that not hearing the evangel did not mean ultimate damnation. The emphatic, "Evangelise ethnic-Jews before anyone else", is traced to London, 1809.

### Dropping in on Hell

I no longer accept postcode salvation as an exclusive benefit in mortal life for postmortal life. And if I believed in post-death evangelism for those who lacked it pre-death, I'd wonder how I could justify pre-death evangelism which being imperfect might be rejected by those who might otherwise have the better chance of perfect post-death evangelism. Some evangelism turns me off! And I sometimes use the term, *ultimate hell*, since I hold that hell casts its long dark shadow upon our world—a shadow reality. As such it can be used to describe those who know not the gospel, compared to the heaven of knowing it.

Many Christians over the millennia have wondered whether what for the redeemed would seem as the anguish of fire and wailing, might for the unredeemed seem bearable, drab and meaningless, but bearable. And isn't this the life of those who reject the good news? Meaningless ignorance, life in the dark? How many atheists speak of a meaning in life? Purpose, within a random evolution, maybe, but meaning, no. And even theists can lack meaning.

As regards ultimate hell, perhaps what Augustine postulated was as good as damnation gets. The top end of hell, with some dim *Imago Dei*, might be as bad as it gets. Richard Adams' *Shardik* portrayed this idea by the deep darkness of the *Streets of Urtah*; Dante was more colourful, but the devil was in the detail.

### Jesus and earthly hell

But however much I seek to tidy up ideas under one roof, if Jesus' warnings don't fit under that roof, it's the wrong roof. Did he offer to those born to perdition, the false hope of an impossible escape? Perhaps only an offer to those in the postcode of evangelism? Calvinism faces the same question: *Why discourage or encourage what your inescapable fate decrees, whether heaven or hell? Why choose a point of decision, when God has decided to elect you?*

In Norse mythology, Odin gladly plucked out one of his eyes to gain wisdom. Probably many a Norse warrior boasted an eye lost in battle, drawing comfort from the idea that the chief divinity was

similarly monoptic in a good cause. Jesus spoke in the hyperbolic language of his people of parting with an eye rather than losing heaven and gaining gehenna (Mt.5:29-30).

So, a vague vision of heaven is better than a vivid vision of hell, and limping in to heaven is better than running in to hell. Of course Jesus spoke poetically, not foolishly. In the Gospel sayings, hell—sometimes meaning the term *hadēs* as separation, and sometimes meaning the term *gehenna* as the smelly smouldering garbage patch exuding methane gas—could mean the immediate lot of those who refused to convert to the messianic kingdom, those who would even stop others from entering God's life. That is, hell in the same sense that *Hebrews* sees for those who revert from the messianic kingdom into the likes of mere Judaism, a goyim-gloom compared to the heaven of true Israel; rubbish instead of meaning.

The story of the Gerasene swine of the Gadara region, also shows that even the demons of *hell* have yet to be confined to *hell* as punishment—Matthew highlighted this fate in store (Mt.8:29; Jude 6). By the way, perhaps the demons begged to control the pigs, to allow them to kill the swine and so mischievously stir up local trouble for Jesus, and so confine him to the Jewish community. If so, Jesus allowed that to be a witness to the Gentiles, for what the demons intended for evil, God intended for good (Gen.50:20).

When the rabbis spoke of the life to come (*olam ha-ba*), sometimes they meant life as *after* death, and sometimes they meant life *in* the messianic age which we now enjoy and they had not seen. What of Mt.5:22? Did Jesus really mean that if you badmouth your neighbour you'll burn forever? If so Sinai should have issued that warning, but it never did. Was it not more likely a warning about spiritual expulsion from the Sinaitic Covenant, like waste from Jerusalem tipped into the nearby landfill tip of Gehenna?

Is it reasonable to deduce that what might superficially seem to have been threats of ultimate hell, were in fact threats of earthly hell—exclusion from earthly heaven? After all, the threats were seemingly for trivial and transient reasons surely at odds with

grace, so grossly disproportionate. “Steal an apple from my tree and I’ll kill you”, is either madness or at most exaggeration.

I think that Jesus neither taught that Sinaitic inclusion was *ultimate* inclusion, nor that Gentile exclusion was *ultimate* exclusion. After all, whether for the messianic or ultimate kingdom, many Gentiles “will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the [ethnic] kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (NRSV: Mt.8:11-2). What a reversal, Sinai having been spiritually contrasted to the gentile world as earthly heaven to earthly hell. Analogically, Sinai Sarah was heaven on earth, and Goyim Hagar hell on earth.

With such thoughts, I suggest that in this context Yeshua’s wider context was of the new covenant kingdom which even the Baptist predicted (Mt.3:2; 5:10), though at that stage his people didn’t realise that Christianity would supersede Sinai as wheat supersedes husk.

Even as the Baptist had begun, so would Jesus go on. As a prophet he called upon his covenant people to prepare their hearts and minds for the heavenly life of the new age, when missing out would be hell: bad trees would be cut down and burnt; the unrepentant baptised in fire; the husks burnt (Mt.3:10-2).

Mark’s account, slightly fuller than Matthew’s, says that it’s far better to enter God’s kingdom life incomplete (one-handed/one-footed/one-eyed), than jump or be pushed complete into gehenna as rubbish (Mk.9:43-7). And v42 spoke of ridicule against those who were considering messiah, and by extension in this age speaks of those who might trip them up lest they enter, or so that they depart (*skandalizō*: 43,45,47). The same word ‘thrown’ (*ballō*) was used for the images of drowning and burning (45,47).

But what if Mk.9:41 is taken not as an eschatological promise to non-Christians who have been kind to Christ’s followers *as Christ’s followers*, but as indicating what they deserve (ie reward)? If so, might the subsequent talk indicate what those unkind to Christ’s followers *as Christ’s followers*, *deserved* (ie damnation)?

Saul the Persecutor *deserved* damnation, but became Paul the Christian. Certainly talk of amputation is metaphorical, not literal, as Origen saw, though Eusebius wondered if Origen had been a bit too slow to see that.

Likewise, punishments in the OT sometimes meant what sinners deserved, not what they would literally get. Substitutionary atonement was about what people deserved—death, cutting off—and what innocent animals or wheat died in representative payment of. Substitutionary sacrifice was a dramatisation a bit like water-baptism, a spiritual story in a literal act. In the latter the baptised see themselves as died, buried, and resurrected, in the death, burial, and resurrection, of messiah to new life.

So, we find contrasts in mortal life between the devil's kingdom-death (hell on earth) and God's kingdom-life (heaven on earth). When Isaiah spoke of the undying worms and fire (66:24; Mk.9:48), he spoke poetically of the messianic age when those who opposed it would be like those slain by Yahweh, a dead contrast to global kingdom life centred around Jerusalem. But generally, those opposed are able to reconsider their opposition and repent. Jesus urged the possible escape from Egypt's hell into Canaan's heaven.

This then is in exclusivism, that ultimacy (both heaven and hell) is determined at ensoulment, but that the choice of immediacy (heaven or hell) is only unlocked by the evangel: *salus intra ecclesiam* (Küng 317). And degrees of both can vary within mortal life. When Core-Israel changed in a messianic direction, unless they changed direction, those who had had heaven on earth under Level 2, reverted to Level 1 under the sway of the evil one (1Jhn.5:19; Rv.2:9), losing the covenant protection they had had in potential, even if not always in practice. Christians (Level 3) have a covenant protection in potential, even if not always in practice.

### Paul and hell

Some who heard Yeshua, believed that both their eyes were fine—yet they were blind. Unwilling to be directly helped (Jhn.9), were they not rejecting the messianic kingdom, so heading deeper into immediate hell, namely exclusion from his church?

If Lk.23:34's "forgive them" was authentic, it was asked not because otherwise ultimate hell awaited them, but that if forgiven they'd be open to heaven-on-earth. He would have prayed aloud to inform them and us, that they were still invited to the immediate life his cross would open up (Jhn.11:42). He would have hoped that they would become Christians, and wished us to know that even killing him did not bar anyone from heaven. A Bonhoeffer should for a Himmler pray. Pharisees had come from a spiritual holiness movement, yet could be hell bent (Mt.23:15), dead to the gospel of immediate life.

One such pharisee was Saul of Tarsus, better known by his Gentile nametag *Paul*. He was hit by hateful truth, and left seething over his victim's troubling sermon and prayer—why else did Luke bang on about Stephen then connect Saul (Ac.7:60)? In the footsteps of Jesus, Stephen too had prayed for his persecutors, not to be saved for heaven after death, but to be saved in life. Saul became a Christian. It is short-sighted to think that forgiveness only refers to ultimate forgiveness from ultimate hell.

By the way, should Judaists nowadays dismiss Stephen's defence as misrepresenting them (Ac.7)? When interviewed by Gentile historian and team colleague Luke, Saul admitted he'd initially been furious over Stephen's speech but later accepted it, and encouraged Luke to document it. So Luke's account was validated by an onsite high-ranking insider. Stephen was a diasporan Jew. His reasoning was soundly based on the organic method of interpretation then used in ethnic-Jewish circles, especially among the diaspora.

Initial reaction motivated Saul to proactively attack Christianity, for Saul shared his fellow Pharisees' blind unwillingness to see (Jhn.9:39-41). Paul, having experienced immediate cutting off from God by the cross fulfilling Sinai, also spoke of an ultimate cutting off from God for those who did not know God, expressed as refusing to obey messiah (2 Ths.1:9). He himself had once refused to obey messiah. But his refusal was based on inbred love of God

(1 Tm.1:13). Many would refuse messiah based on their inbred hatred of God.

Paul didn't speak much in hell terms, though he connected *hadēs* and *thanatos* (1 Cor.15:55). Likewise John saw both as secondary pictures being thrown into the eternal fiery lake—the second death/*thanatos* (Rv.20:14), showing that *hadēs* can be used as a mortal dimension (v13) handing over to an immortal one.

And concerning the church and its mission, anathema texts merely speak of cutting off from the church—Ananias and Sapphira, like Nadab and Abihu from Sinai—(Rm.9:3; 1 Cor.16:22; Gal.1:8-9). “The malediction is probably intended to apply to any headstrong provocateurs within the church.... [Similarly] 2 Ths.3:14... 1 Cor.5:9...and Tts.3:10-1” (Garland 2015:17688-91/28028).

### How hellish is hell?

As to ultimate hell, how hellish is it? The *Divina Commedia* by the C13-4 Italian poet, Dante Alighieri, divided his idea of spirit life—both human and angelic—into *paradiso* (paradise), *purgatorio* (purgatory), and *inferno* (hell/gehenna). Dante pictured purgatory as redemptive, with angels correcting Christians from their remaining sinfulness in preparation for heaven. In the *Commedia*, above were levels (concentric circles) of heaven (ultimate life), which could reflect the biblical idea of graded rewards. Below there were levels (concentric circles) of hell, based on how evil people had been: limbo, the top level (hell's outer circle), had the virtuous such as Saladin, Seneca, and Socrates, who on Earth hadn't heard of Christ. They would probably live forever in pleasant verdant land.

Dante had not been the first to suggest levels of hellishness. His lower levels became ever more hellish, but hell had a quality of bearability by its citizens, howbeit unbearable to heaven's. Tidy freaks can't bear slums; slum dwellers can. Will the fate of those who are simply not born towards God, be a no-fault separation from God, even as in Sinaitic Israel, where those who failed symbolic standards of wholeness such as by skin disease, were doomed to form their own outskirt community, at least while below standards? This assumes some residual goodness.

“Milton was right”, said my teacher. ‘The choice of every lost soul can be expressed in the words, ‘Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven.’ There is always something they insist on keeping, even at the price of misery. There is always something they prefer to joy—that is, to reality” (Lewis 1946:69). “To enter heaven is to become more human than you ever succeeded in being on earth; to enter hell, is to be banished from humanity” (Lewis 1972:113). Is such banishment from the good life they knew before death, banishing our jokes about enjoying mates in hell? Any reigning in hell, within the moral void of goodlessness, would be a reign of terror—dystopia, not utopia; fiends, not friends. This assumes no residual goodness. Against the charge of taking the hell out of hell, William Crockett said that even “Jude took the hell out of hell because in verses 7 and 13 he talked about hell as being both eternal fire and the blackest darkness...clearly metaphorical expressions.... Jesus also took the hell out of hell because he used opposing images of fire and darkness.... The truth is that these incompatible images were never intended to be literal...” (Carson 1996:531). The extreme imagery made an extreme point, namely that the issue is extremely important and has an existential warning not to walk as the demons walk, but to walk in righteousness within messiah.

### *Dropping in on Heaven*

Joy is the serious business of heaven, and looking at what we can enjoy, and into the future as to what we might enjoy, is all part and parcel of exploring salvation. We glimpse glory now, and glory to come, and our sight can be helped by threads of the past, rewoven.

### *Exodus and Canaan are past, present, and future*

Think Levels: a time is coming, yet is now (Jhn.4:23). We can picture our spiritual past, present, and future, in Israel-history terms. Each time we re-enact the eucharist, we can imagine ourselves in one sense, as gratefully living abundantly now in a true Canaan, a true land of promise, for heaven is now. But in another sense, life now is as walking hopefully in a true exodus towards Canaan, for

heaven is to come. And both pictures look back to the true Passover of conversion. The true eucharist is for the true Israel.

In another sense, each time we re-enact the eucharist, we can picture ourselves on Passover night, anticipating the release of conversion unto hope and abundance. And if the musicians allow me by silence, I picture myself at Passover, eating tasteless bread and tasty roast, awaiting the dawn after years of backbreaking slavery under Pharaoh. Am I dreaming? Will I awake still under oppression, or awake to joy unspeakable and full of glory?

Past hints help us to see light within the mortal shadowlands, of immediate salvation, of glory now. Once upon a time Ethnic-Israel had had the most revelation, superseded only by messianic revelation giving special spiritual sight in the here and now, heaven on earth. We go to gym/aerobics to develop the body; we read and socialise to develop the mind and soul; we go to the christ to best develop our vision. “In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us through a son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe...” (NABRE: Heb.1:1-2).

But we should also look beyond the mortal shadowlands, into ultimate salvation, though not to harp on about it (let the reader understand). There is unending glory to come. Whether Augustine, Arminius, or John Murray who espoused universalism, were right about who goes in, it’ll just be about the in-ness. In Christ, the pioneer of our faith, we can boldly go in, and boldly enjoy.

### *Heaven is past, present, and future*

Besides heaven-on-earth, the word *heaven* covers a number of concepts. For example, it's Earth's sky (Gen.7:11), it's the cosmos (Ps.8:3), metaphorically it's God's home beyond the universe (Rm.1:18; 1 Cor.15:47). God's son of God's beyond-home, incarnated into our universe-home, becoming Jesus the carnate son. Then after his atoning death he rose with his carnate body glorified, and dwells thus within our universe-home, God's universal-home (*oikia*: Jhn.14:2-3). In what dimension he dwells hidden I don't know, but I doubt that space travel could locate his body. I think that he

watches us along with the great cloud of witnesses, until the curtain falls and with him we exit the theatre for the cosmic story. It's good to go down these rabbit holes, and the study of aioniology (the study about eternity) does involve looking beyond death's door: "Because of the joy awaiting him, [Jesus] endured the cross" (NLT: Heb.12:2). Besides the joy he saw awaiting us, there was the joy he saw awaiting himself personally, a joy beyond this world, and he's pictured as being at God's right hand (Ps.16:11), the place of highest honour, joy, and authority, under God.

After death there awaits our ultimate heaven too, if we truly desire God as God. This is no eternal camp fire sing-along surrounding some supreme egotist, but there there is eternal enjoyment within God's creation, once we're freed from the limitations of mortal life and our bodies are immortalised and able to travel throughout the universe at will.

*Revelation* has broad imagery—city, river, etcetera. Let's explore its universe! Its aim is to be suggestive of deeper realities. Literalism isn't the endgame. Exploration and marvel shall be ours, within the universal voice and face of our creator. Our unending and spontaneous joy will be to his praise, when we see as we are seen. But will we ever need spacesuits?

Jesus reminded Nathanael about Jacob's open heaven dream, of angels using a stairway between heaven and earth. Sci-Fi fans may speak about photosomatic beings inter-phasing between one dimension and another, which might be nearer the reality. God gives visions in symbolic language, and above/below contrasts—symbolising heaven/earth/hades—have long been convenient.

What begins in time and space must continue in time and space—but has space hidden dimensions, like a mansion has many rooms? When the apostles hid behind locked doors, did Jesus pass through those doors by *phasing* his body? We are scheduled to become as Jesus is. Bodies immortal, able to eat and drink for pleasure, not for need. Glorified, Jesus was still able to eat and drink. Enjoyment value, not survival value. Exploring eternity is part of exploring salvation.

Indeed there are wondrous things ahead for us, who will be immortalised above and beyond this world. One of the better bits from Margaret Clarkson's *In Resurrection Bodies*, 1987, is remarkably good: "O resurrection body, young, radiant, vibrant, free / with powers unthought, undreamed of—how rich your joys will be! / Through endless years to marvel, design, create, explore / in resurrection wonder to worship, serve, adore!" (stanza 4).

Yes, I know it's kinda weird to sing to our yet to be body, but it's her terms of wonder which make the song. One day we'll rise bodily. I used to wonder about this, and perhaps you have too, especially when realising that after years in a grave—perhaps a watery one—one's body is, well, not entirely looking its best.

"It is presumably a foolish fantasy (not justified by the words of Scripture) that each spirit should recover those particular units of matter which [it] ruled before. For one thing, they would not be enough to go round: we all live in second-hand suits and there are doubtless atoms in my chin which have served many another man, many a dog, many an eel, many a dinosaur. Nor does the unity of our bodies, even in this present life, consist in retaining the same particles. My form remains one, though the matter in it changes continuously. I am, in that respect, like a curve in a waterfall." (Lewis 1947:179)

In short, we shall summon atoms to clothe our spirits in human form, the species-form which our lord arose with. I presume that those atoms will abide with us immortally, for our biology will be immortal without cellular death and growth. I suspect that we will assume the form we were destined for at conception, and that even those of us who died before birth will assume the mature form which would have been achieved given human growth without disease or mishap. Our inner identity will be clear to all we meet.

Putting aside wacky ideas of all being 30 y.o. human males, will we look as battered as when we died? Should plastic surgery be our last rite? Comanches used to mutilate their victims before killing them, in the belief that the victims would go into the afterlife damaged. Do we share that idea?

Let us look to the pioneer of our salvation. That Jesus maintained battle scars *prior* to his ascension, is clearly a given. But should Matthew Bridges' *Crown Him with Many Crowns* (1851), have assumed that Christ's "wounds, [are] visible above, in beauty glorified"? Though *after his resurrection* he purposely kept his wounds—seen by Thomas (Jhn.20:27) and possibly by Cleopas (Lk.24:30)—it is clearly not a given that Jesus maintained his battle scars *after his ascension*: shall we wear our medals in heaven? And of course, Rv.5:6 no more affirms that John saw the scars of flogging and crucifixion, than it affirms that Jesus now has seven horns and seven eyes: symbolism is symbolism.

Let's not be dotty with hopes of bodily beauty, nor despair the lack of it. Though surely our bodies will declare God's glory, so too will the heavens declare God's glory. But let's not be too quick to think of heaven as a bait or bribe. Some seek the glory of marriage and seek for someone to marry; some first see someone and then yearn to marry them. But both approaches are far different from mercenaries who seek to marry a wealthy person to gain their wealth. In fact, since the heavens declare his glory, to accept God in order to get heaven might not be so much amiss. After all, isn't loving his creation tied in with loving its creator?

But our thinking in the here and now can be misleading, and like Emeth in C S Lewis' *The Last Battle*, our hearts and heads might travel different journeys in mortal life. But eventually our heads will follow our hearts: a good heart is better in God's eyes than a good head. We don't always know what we seek, until we find.

Heaven is not dangled before us as a carrot, as a jewel to tempt a thief. No, heaven is the rightful reward for those who have truly sought God, even if their heads have been misguided. Likewise, the joys of marriage are for those who have truly sought their spouse, even if their heads have been misguided.

And heaven is wonderful. Paul applied some of Isaiah's sentiments to the unimaginable having happened (1 Cor.2:9; Is.52:15; 64:4), namely the opening up of Global Israel. But I think we may extend it into the future unveiling into which John the Seer peered. Let's

discount as naive the picture of white clouds populated with little cherubs stroking golden harps, or a gigantic campfire circle of harpists whose only job *ad nauseam* is to praise God who's sat in the middle lapping it up. Rv.5:8 and 15:2 are more Picasso than Photo-realistic. Some say that we'll neither go anywhere nor learn anything. How boring! I think of the *A Little Princess* (1995) film: Lavinia's harp and boredom, versus Sarah's fun and joy! If the harp is heaven's best, well, God could do better. And he has!

J R R Tolkien reminded us that those created in the creator's image are subcreators, so if our imagination can do better yet at best is a mere shadow to God's, his surprise for us must indeed far exceed our wildest imagination. In *The Silver Chair*, Puddleglum faces the idea that perhaps his belief in Narnia is a mere child's imagination. Yet, says he to the queen whose sweet magic seeks (like Political Correctivism and 'shame on you' lobbies) to overcome good sense, it's better dying for that imagination than living in her unimaginably dark and dreary kingdom.

*Job* is something of a detective story. The big question was why such a good man had such terrible suffering. Unlike his readers he didn't see the first act, which showed that at one level Yahweh possibly sought to teach the satan, humanity's ultimate sceptic, that humans were capable of unselfish loyalty. Yahweh allowed the common calamities of life to reach Job.

Many contemporaries of *Job* asked the same basic question—should the deities be worshipped purely for advantage and protection? And what if the deities, far from benefitting us, allowed or sent overwhelming suffering? Is suicide not the logical escape—Curse God and die?

The dialogues carry certain presuppositions, wheedling out whether or not only sin leads to suffering, and whether the depth of suffering matches the depth of sin. If the man wasn't at fault, was the deity at fault? Surely Yahweh wasn't a cosmic sadist? No, but the satan was.

*Job* finally bowed to overwhelming wisdom with a *Your will be done*, and the drama ended with superabundant blessings for him

and humble pie for his well-intentioned friends who hadn't understood God well enough to help Job.

For his part, Job was blest to meditate on wonders concealed from his peers. Some of these wonders we can now enjoy by scientific instruments. But what if one day we will enjoy them better, and without instruments? Does that superabundant glory await us? Job was encouraged to think about the microscopic (38:22), the astronomical (31), the mathematical (33), and the ornithological (41). Clues, I think, to heaven, for insight, enjoyment, and intellectual challenge.

But isn't nature to be destroyed? As we've seen, "...the day of the lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up" (NKJV: 2 Pt.3:10). Well, it's not just a question of what Peter said. It's a question of what Peter meant. Reformationism isn't as happy as Lutheranism to take this as being literal, perhaps being more nature affirming.

By and large the Bible speaks of removing the dross, burning the fields of weeds for a fresh start. I think it's as Smalley said of such talk in Rv.21:1: "The removal of the sea does not mean that the physical universe has been completely destroyed, but rather that it has been completely transformed, and that there is now no threat from Satan" (524). *Sea* had long carried the ideas of chaos and mythological horrors.

Similarly, Isaac Watts sang of joy: *No more need sin and sorrow grow / Nor thorns infest our ground / He came to make / God's blessings flow / Far as the curse was found / Far as the curse was found / Far as, far as, the curse was found (Joy to the World).*

Scripture affirms the universe to continue after the rapture, and to be glorified (Rm.8:20-1). It's likely that 2 Pt.3:10/Rv.21:1 speak poetically of corrupt governance and unfair society ending. The old washed away like at the Noahic Flood, but with a new and blessed intoxication to follow.

The natural creation is good, and our father is still the father of the animal kingdom. It will, I suspect, continue in some way liberated from the impact of sinful man, and is poetically pictured as longing for new management, not maelstrom.

Yet the psalmists, rejoicing rightly in the shining stars, were awed that Yahweh cared far more for mankind's destiny than for the stars of wonder, a destiny that Jesus began to unfold by becoming the first of the new humanity (Heb.2:8-9): "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than [yourself, God], and crowned them with glory and honour" (NRSV: Ps.8:4-5).

Once glorified, Jesus could shift between dimensions, ignoring walls, yet eating food (Lk.24:36,42-3), a pattern for us. Space is God's universal playground for us. In *Out of the Silent Planet* (C S Lewis), once he left our silent planet, Ransom felt surrounded by life in Deep Heaven, what we call angels. Decontamination from sin makes room for true joy.

I'm not against the planet of my birth (Earth), nor the town of my birth (Stafford). I have long left that town, but can happily revisit. But my future is brighter. Glorified by our heavenly father, we will fly from Mother Earth's nest. We will planet hop, star hop through space, captaining our glorified bodies, safe from harm to revel in exploring both God's creation and God the creator.

Glorified eyesight, glorified hearing, seeing in infrared the 'snowflakes' of other worlds, hearing the whale songs of other planets, feeling the pulse of quasars, at liberty to phase in and out with dimensions we cannot yet see or touch. We will hover over universal history without TARDIS or Internet. It's a mighty big universe, but then, we'd love a mighty big playground, an unlimited adventure park. God will give the desires of our hearts.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Legolas is able to adjust the curvature of his eyes to focus them as binoculars. We will have more control over our physical bodies, once glorified. We will be able to communicate astronomically without communicators. We will be able to adjust our eyes to the telescopic and to the

microscopic. We will be able to see endless colour combinations beyond the rainbow. We will be able to revel in creaturely life. We will be able to behold the inner life of the atoms; to explore the deepest oceans of worlds unexplored, even their very cores; to explore more taste buds than a ratatouille rat; to zoom around the universe without needing protective suits and spacecraft, and kryptonite will hold no fears. If I'm proved wrong, sue me.

Will we not have abilities far beyond that of angels? And will not our spirits, once purified, be able to totally share with one another, redeemed humanity without shame or fear? Oh what release and what rapture!

Earth is a wonderful planet. It's so anthropic that some atheistic scientists even create a multiverse in their imaginations to blind their followers from the idea that Earth seems rather God-shaped for man to live and to thrive. Our planet is so amazing within the amazing universe. Will we be confined to one planet? I think not. Amazement awaits beyond death when we meet our risen lord, who has bodily gone where no man, no human, has gone before.

In a local graveyard somebody once put a plaque that boasted that if possible they'd drag the deceased kicking and screaming back from heaven to this woe begotten world—shades of Persephonē. That was their definition of love! What do we teach in schools? Did their boast imagine that heaven was hell and that hell (or this fallen world) was heaven? One feels for Lazarus, the proto-martyr who was summoned back only to have to die all over again. There are better things ahead than any we leave behind.

With a Pickwickian smile, we tell the youngster that if we could we would drag them back from their marvellous holiday camp, where all are friends, back into dull old school where many are bullies. Good heavens above! *Romans* teaches that death opens up new possibilities. To die is not to pick up where we left off, nor to clamour for the former times.

Graves that speak of reunions speak of folly. “Unless, of course, you can literally believe all that stuff about family reunions ‘on the further shore’, pictured in entirely earthly terms. But that is all unscriptural,

all out of bad hymns and lithographs. There's not a word of it in the Bible. And it rings false. We know it couldn't be like that. Reality never repeats. The exact same thing is never taken away and given back. How well the spiritualists bait their hook! 'Things on this side are not so different after all.' There are cigars in heaven. For that is what we should all like. The happy past restored" (Lewis 1985:23).

The ancient Sadducees had a standard rubbishing of resurrection. It would be both silly and turning the biblical law of levirate marriage into an eternal sin, they said, if a woman widowed more than once had all her husbands restored as husbands after death (Mk.12:18-23)—eternal polyandry! Jesus rubbished their conclusion, by rubbishing their premise that spouses were reunited *as spouses*.

Relationship links—be it of parents, spouses, offspring, friends, or enemies—all perish on death. One who has died a father no longer stands in that relationship—they have been retired from the job and if redeemed will enjoy richer nonbiological relationships: she who was my mother is no longer my mother, simply one among billions whom I as a brother shall meet as heavenly sisters. Unlike me, heaven is neither insular nor parochial.

From family trees the redeemed fly free, disencumbered. The joys and trials of earthly life have helped shape them, but family ties have been preliminary, at best anticipations of true life, true relationships, true unity, true human society. Beyond this life of shame, honour, regrets, loves, failures, and satisfaction, disinhibited we shall share our joys and insights with each other of God's goodness beyond mere speech, of God. No longer hiding ourselves, disinhibition shall be a gift from God, as we stop to chat with one another, ranging the universe in all its wonder.

The universe is our father's. What better medium to explore and enjoy for eternity, feeling his vibrancy throughout time and space, as the fish feels always its watery surround as it moves through underwater marvels. Thus always worshipping; thus supremely worshipping. Oh the music of heaven—here the imagery of harps perhaps meets reality. Our fascination will be the harps. Life will

have moved from talk to song, from the prosaic to the poetic, to infinity and beyond. With a nod to C12 Bernard of Clairvaux's *Jesu dulcis memoria*: "Father, our deepest joy are you / As you our prize will be / Father you are our glory true / and in eternity."

If he is our supreme desire, however hidden, our future is bright. In my *Revisiting the Pilgrim's Progress* (2021:201-22),

I saw in my dream, that much more did the shining ones say, both of what they knew, and what they expected to be. But now they drew near to the great gate. And they were loudly celebrated before the gate, and proclaimed to be faithful pilgrims of the way.

Then the heavenly host upon the walls, proclaimed: "Blessed are those who are invited to the prince's wedding feast!" For as a bridegroom welcomes his bride deeper into his life, so the prince would welcome his pilgrims deeper into his life beyond the river. Trumpeters and buglers arrayed in white, stood forth, sounding their horns to celebrate the pilgrims, as they drew near to the gate. And the very procession was of heaven to heaven, for the very mountain was blest. And bells pealed from the outer walls, to which Christmas bells were at best a prelude. And Christian and Hopeful knew that at last they had arrived home.

And as they stood at last before the gate, many notables looked down from the walls: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Leah, Joseph, Asenath, Moses, Zipporah, Salmah, Rahab, and yea, far too many here to mention. And many unheard of, on whom the pilgrims looked and knew their names. And yet the names of none were what they had been, for each name was unique, as each of the redeemed is unique. And those names are hidden, until it is time to unveil them at the apocalypse.

And Christian laid aside his precious scroll, for he had no longer any need of its assurance. But Hopeful had never had one, save within his heart. It had been assured him that the king had given him a new heart, had put a new spirit within him, had

exchanged his heart of stone for a heart of flesh, and planted his law deep within his heart.

And they entered then into the City, and were given such clothing as was worn by such of its dwellers who had come from mortal lands. And heralds proclaimed unto them: "Enter in to the joy of your lord and your king." And the pilgrims cried aloud in their joy: "Praise, honour, glory, and power, be laid before the king of kings, and yielded unto the prince, for ever and ever."

Then through the gates of splendour they went into the golden city, which needs no sun nor star to lighten it, whose very streets are of gold, yet as velvet beneath the feet. And the pilgrims strode in, and many crowded the streets to welcome them with great hallel and hello. And sweet sounds surrounded them of stringed instruments, of percussion, and wind instruments too. And the City dwellers sang songs of Zion. And some of the shining ones had wings, and their faces were not of the world. Yet their story need not be told here. They too sang: "Holy, holy, holy, is the king. He always was, he always is, and always he will be."

But at the foot of the mountain stood Ignorance. He had made his own way through Beulah Land. And if he had found his talk with the pilgrims irksome, he had found talk with those of Beulah, even less to his liking. But still he had sought Celestial City, howbeit with more zeal than knowledge. And of the fruits of Beulah, he had not feasted. For to his credit he was honest, and, remaining in ignorance about the joys of pilgrims, feasted not on their fruit.

And thus he came, rather enhungered, unto the river. And there his fears were the less. For, having had little fear of his own sins, he little feared that they would engulf him with guilt. And, having confidence in himself, he thought the river but a small barrier. It might have been otherwise, had he come to the river at a section where stood on the other side a mighty volcano, not a city. But by grace, the City was before him. Indeed, by grace the river seemed calm. Thus it was that Ignorance floated himself across the river. Indeed, some who espied him—though he was

hard to see—wondered whether he ferried himself across on vain hope. But no help did he at first receive on the other side. Indeed he floundered a while in the mud. His besetting confidence, did there desert him. And it was only with great difficulty, that he did haul himself ashore in dishevelled state as a floundering fish.

And he bethought himself why such should be. For he had expected to wine and dine in the presence of the king, as he had been taught in Conceit. He had had a rather good opinion about himself. But now, bedraggled and forlorn, he began at last to doubt himself. When he had seen Christian and Hopeful cross over, he had somewhat pitied them. Yet now he thought of their welcome beyond the river. He knelt down and wept, that no fuss was made of him. Indeed, he had expected more, not none.

And the sun dried the mud on him, so that he trudged as one caked in mud for garments. And only his tears had removed, somewhat, the mud from his eyes. Then unto him came at last a shining one, who began to speak with him, and to wipe away his stains, beginning with his face. “O man,” said the shining one, “few at first did see you. For only now, when you are caked in real mud, are you clear to our eyes. For there is less to you, than in your imagination. For those who think overmuch of themselves in the visible world which is before the river, are less visible on this side of it.”

And by these words, Ignorance at last feared for his health. For he saw now that he was insubstantial, having little, when he had thought he had much. And he began to wonder whether he would ever eat and drink in the king’s company. “Is it then,” asked he, “that I am fit only for the fire? For it is said that a way to hell there is, that borders on the very verge of heaven.”

And the shining one smiled sadly. “Alas,” said he, “you are like a branch that is barren, and has been fit only to be taken away from its vine and burnt. And that bespeaks your lack of fruit. But the grace of the king is not based on your worth, or lack thereof.

“Yet you have not walked the Pilgrim Way as a pilgrim. Thus, you have not enjoyed the Way in the way that the prince intended, nor helped

any along the Way in the way that the prince intended. Thus you did walk the Way with loss and with no gain. But behold, that Way lies only the other side of the river, and is to you no more. Therefore, be of good cheer.

“Those who have walked in robes of righteousness, whether hard or smooth their crossing of the river, are easily seen from the City. For truth be told, they have gained in substance, and their garments are recognised. Thus their welcome the more is. For the more, grace is.

“Through ignorance you have not known the prince, nor his father, and therefore missed much before the river. Still, you have sought somewhat the king as the king, and all who seek shall find. Henceforth, you shall no longer be called Ignorance, and a new name shall be given you within the City.

“As to hell, the river spans the world, and some cross at points where hell, not this city, stands eager to meet them. But be at rest. For none who have truly sought to feast with our king, cross at those points. For all follow their heart to heart’s end.”

And the face of he who was no longer Ignorance, smiled. Yea, it did glow, for the shining one had wiped it clean. And others came forth from the City, bearing garments pure and white to replace the mud of shame.

And then I awoke. And behold, it had been a dream.

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## The Beginning

*The prince's path to his palace,  
Lies through this languid land.  
Forthright from fear to fearlessness  
Commit to Christ's command.  
For love and lord, lag not nor lapse  
Stride home from shadowland.  
Through gates of gold, by God's own grace  
Soon we'll as spirits stand.*

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## Books by this author

### Theology

#### **Israel's Gone Global**

Israel's Gone Global traces salvation through the term, Israel. Was the covenant with the people-nation of Yakob-Yisrael, crossed out? How eternal is covenant? To examine that, we examine marriage. Can a covenant partner be truly divorced? Has Yeshua-Yisrael mediated a spiritual covenant with a spiritual Israel? Is evangelism of ethnic-Jews needless, a priority, or neither?

No one could have everlasting life but for the cross, but has it always been globally accessible? Might any who die as Atheists, Hindus, or Islamists, make heaven? And is eternal life joyful? Is everlasting life fun?

Tackling the question of people who die in infancy (or as adults who never heard the gospel), we consider whether it is fair if only those who don't die in infancy get a chance of eternal damnation (if infant universalism), or alone get a chance of eternal heaven (if infant damnation). Does predilectionism make best sense of biblical revelation?

Opportunities to enjoy eternal life spring from the new covenant—reasons to rejoice. But what about salvation history before that covenant?

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#### **Singing's Gone Global**

Singing's Gone Global, briefly explores the background of singing, before and into ancient Israel. It examines the impact songs have on those who sing, and on those who listen, touching on spiritual warfare. It looks at how nonsense songs neither make sense to evangelism, nor to the evangelised, and asks, “Is there a mûmak in the room?”

Oddly some songwriters simply misunderstand prayer. Part two covers the basics of the trinity, focusing on the spirit in order to understand types of prayer (eg request, gratitude, adoration, chat),

leading in turn to a better understanding of our heavenly father, our brother, our helper, and ourselves in Christ's likeness.

Next we look at some common problems. Part three focuses on problems such as buddyism, decontextualising, misvisualisation, and unitarianism. Diagnosis can help Christ's 'bride' to recover from suboptimal and unbiblical songs (Eph.5:18-30).

Giving a Problem Avoidance Grade (PAG)—an A+ to Unsatisfactory scale—in part four we examine specific songs. Weapons forged (Part three), the mûmakil can be attacked, seeking to save and be saved.

Subsequently the book concludes by showing how Christmas carols may be tweaked to better serve our weary world, rejoicing that joy to the world has come.

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### **The Word's Gone Global**

The Word's Gone Global, examines Bible text (trusted by early Islam) and introduces textual critique. It looks at the Eastern Orthodox Bible and the Latin Vulgate. Did the Reformation improve text and translation? Were Wycliffe, Tyndale, and Martin, helpful?

Why did the New International Version begin, and why does it enrage? Why did complementarians Don Carson and Wayne Grudem, clash? Is marketing hype between formal and functional equivalence, meaningless? Which version or versions should you regularly read?

In English-speaking circles, Broughton wished to burn Bancroft's King James Version, yet many KJV proponents—think Gail Riplinger and Peter Ruckman—wish to burn all alternatives. More heat than light?

Grade Charts cover 30+ English versions on issues such as God's name, God's son's deity, marriage, gender terms, anti-polytheism, and various issues in John's Gospel. No, Tyndale was not 'born again'. No, John was not antisemitic. No, he did not disagree with the other Gospels.

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### **Prayer's Gone Global**

Prayer's Gone Global, begins with ancient civilisations and prayer (the Common Level). Then it narrows into Ancient Israel and prayer (the Sinai Level). Then it deepens and widens into Global Israel and prayer (the Christian Level). Deity is revealed as trinity: Sabellians mislead.

Relating to the trinity includes the Holy Spirit. We should of course work with him, but should we worship him, complain to him, chat with him? Above the spirit stands the often forgotten father—oh let Jesusism retire.

Authority is another issue. Are we authorised to decree and declare? Is binding and loosing actually prayer, or is it evangelism? Is it biblical never to command miracles? Do we miss out on the supernatural which Jesus modelled for us, too fearful of strange fire to offer holy fire?

You can freshen up your prayer life—ride the blessed camel, not the gnats. Listen to Saint Anselm pray, and C S Lewis and 'Malcolm' discuss prayer, and be blessed.

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### **Revelation's Gone Global**

Revelation's Gone Global, is a telling of John's future, as if by a then contemporary named Sonafets speaking to his church about how John's apocalyptic scroll related to their days, and about what was still future to John.

Encouragement is a big theme. Roman persecution was an unpredictable beast which ferociously lashed out here and there—what church or Christian was safe? But God stood behind the scenes, allowing but limiting their enemy, and messiah walked among the churches, lights to the world.

Victory lay neither with Rome nor demons, but with God, and with the warrior lamb who had been slain. Victory was guaranteed, and would finally be enjoyed.

Exhortation was given to believers, to play their part while on the mortal stage. They were to walk in the light, and not to let the show down by straying.

Angels of power, actively working out God's will, far exceed the puny forces against God and his church. His wrath was not pleasant, but could be redemptive until the new age begins.

C S Lewis' essay, *The World's Last Night*, is briefly examined to enjoin a calm awareness of the ongoing battle we are in, and the brightness to come when the king returns.

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### **The Father's Gone Global**

Focusing from God as father, to the specific person of God the father, *The Father's Gone Global* looks at the biblical parent/child pattern from Genesis, through Sinai, and into the Church.

Abba as a new covenant word expresses deep filial affection even under deep anguish in our Gethsemane battles. Coming through God's belovèd son, it speaks into the church and into our lives.

Though to many the 'forgotten father', human parents/fathers should 'put on' God the father, and his children should 'put on' his son. We forget him to our cost.

Human applications aside, what is the Eternal Society? Is filial relationship modelled by God the son incarnate? Are we to be always obedient to our father and guided by the spirit?

Eschatologically the father will be supreme, but even now he is the one to whom the son points. Christian life should relate to God our father, God our brother, and God our helper, prioritising the father.

Renewal of the church is vital for our confused world, but renewal which downplays the father falls short of the good news which Christ created and the spirit circulates. May this book play its part.

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## **Salvation Now and Life Beyond**

Salvation Now, divides the doctrine of salvation into the four main levels of common humanity, the Sinai covenant, the Christian covenant, and life beyond.

A big weight is put on the term, Israel, as God's master plan. This too has four levels, meaning a man, a people, a new man, and a new people, respectively.

Various ideas of what Christianity—the new covenant for the new people—is good for, and how we get into it and best enjoy it, are examined, and a faith-based in exclusivism is suggested.

Everlasting life is seen as the ultimate goal of salvation, universal meaningfulness and love beyond all fears and pains.

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## **Revisiting**

### **Revisiting The Challenging Counterfeit**

Revisiting The Challenging Counterfeit, is an extended review of Raphael Gasson's 'The Challenging Counterfeit' (1966). Raphael was an ethnic-Jew whose spiritual journey included many years as a Christian Spiritualist minister.

Today, when psychic phenomena captures the imagination and the bank accounts of popular media, it is useful to unearth the witness of one who had well worn the T-shirt of a medium with pride, only to bury it in unholy ground as a thing of shame and of sorrow and of wasted time.

Challengingly, his book exposes what true Spiritualism is. He had nothing but high praise for Spiritualists, and deep condemnation for Spiritualism. For he had discovered true Spiritualism to be itself a fake of true Spirituality, a mere Counterfeit that, in depositing death in the mind, enthroned it in the soul.

Counterfeit phenomena covered include apparitions, Rescue Work and haunted houses, materialisation of pets, psychic healing, Lyceums, clairvoyance, and OOBES—to name but a few. This book surveys his exposé of Spiritualism's offer of fascinating

fish bait, false food falling short of real food for the soul. Though it takes issue with Raphael on a number of points, his core insights are powerful and timely, helping us to avoid—or escape from—a Challenging Counterfeit, and to discover true spiritual currency.

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### **Revisiting The Pilgrim's Progress**

Revisiting The Pilgrim's Progress, is a re-dreaming of John Bunyan's most famous dream. An ex-serviceman and ex-jailbird, he found fortune, freedom, and fans worldwide.

This dream journey is substantially Bunyan's from this world, and into that which is to come. It is not a fun story, but it has lots of danger, and joy, and reflection on some big life themes.

Profoundly, sinners who become pilgrims become saints. But that can make life more difficult. One big question is, Is it worth it? One big temptation is, Turn back or turn aside. And if you see others do so, that makes it harder not to. Bunyan was tempted. And he discovered that not deserting, can lead to despair. But he also discovered a key to liberty.

Pre-eminently, it is a story of grace which many follow. Grace begins the journey, helps along the way, and brings the story to a happily ever after. Are all fairy stories based on heaven?

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### **Fantasy**

#### **The Simbolinian Files**

From Simboliniad, a crystal planet long gone, came the vampire race, the wapierze, thelodynamic shapeshifters seeking blood. Most oppose Usen, King of the Light, so side with the Necros. Seldom do the Guardians intervene. These files, secretly secured from various insider sources, reveal something of what they have done, and will do.

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#### **Vampire Redemption**

Artificial intelligence, created by superpowers to save man, questions man's worth, and becomes The Beast. Escaping into the

wild, many discover a wilderness infested by zombies and diabolical spirits. Who will help? Father Doyle? He's tied up with the mysterious Lilith. Tariq? He's tied up with Wilma. Can the bigoted old exorcist deliver him from evil?

Radical problems can require radical solutions. But does man really need hobbs, elves, and the more ancient of days? In the surrounding shadows, vampires and demons form an alliance, raising the stakes against Whitby and Tyneside. Powerful vampires live shrouded within Whitby, speaking of life beyond this galaxy. Is salvation in the stars? Is Sunniva, the despised woman of Alban, worth dying for? Big questions, needing big answers. Not even Guardian Odin can foretell man's fate and, as silent stars go by, one little town must awake from its dreams.

Though The Beast slumbers purposeless and undisturbed, in the far west a global giant slowly opens its yellow eyes and threatens to smother the earth in fire and ice. There is one chance only.

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### **Vampire Extraction**

Bitterly long their imprisoned spirits lay, fast bound to Earth's drowsy decay. To the Simbolinian race, there was no hell on Earth, for Earth was hell, and Usen the cosmic jailer. Was it so surprising that as vampires they stalked Usen's children for blood? Most chose the Kingdom of Night, wary of both the Kingdom of Necros and the Kingdom of Dawn.

As queen of the Night, Lilith's story streams through the summer sands of Sumer, and through the green woods of Sherwood. It flags up both dishonour and joy, and cuts across the paths of Ulrica the Saxon and Robin the Hood, as tyrannies rise and fall in merry England. Bigotry seldom has a good word to say about Usen, nor about mercy. Reluctantly, Lilith examines what it means to show mercy, to show weakness. Wulfgar had enslaved Ulrica: is it mercy to let her burn; should mercy have spared Lona? Could Hamashiach turn daughter into sister? Could Count Dracula be turned from his madness? Has Draven really betrayed his mother? Life has many questions.

Tales picture ideas, letting us walk through the eyes of others to better see ourselves. This story exposes subplots behind common history. How these chronicles came to be written up is, in the spirit confidentiality, not for the public eye. What truth is within you must judge. Discrimination is a gift from Beyond, from which the words still echo: mercy is better than sacrifice. Indeed mercy can be sacrifice. Judge well.

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### **Vampire Count**

Vampires were not always earthbound, nor are all evil, but being victims of Usen's Eighth Law, his Children became their fair game. Yet the Night Kingdom was divided: some veered to the Necros; some to the Dawn. Who was wrong; who was right?

Long ago one incited his people to racial violence against elven and human kinds. Ever he strove to be king of the Night, and unto Necuratu the Dark Lord he gave the dragon shape. He made war upon the ancient Middle East, even the Nephilim War. Against him the Light raised flood and division.

At last his own people, paying the price of his rampage, bound him in deep sleep. Yet the millennia seemed meaningless to him: even the rising of Hamashiach hardly disturbed his dreams. At last awoken, he and his brides stalked the hills of Transylvania. Only the fear of Lilith—and after her unforgivable sin, Queen Rangda—chained their bloodlust.

Dracula sought escape and autonomy. By cunning and devious means, he immigrated to London via Whitby. Pursuit followed swiftly, with a shadowminder helping a circle of human headhunters, though they sought the death of all vampires.

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### **Vampire Grail**

Wulfgar is a vampire, a thelodynamic creature from another galaxy, now locked into our world by one called the Cosmic Jailer. He hides a tormenting secret from his queen, Lilith, which the

Necros use as blackmail. She will only go so far with the Necros against Hamashiach—Wulfgar must go further.

Unknown to the Darkness, to bury Hamashiach is to plant the Light. From the buried seed springs life, and humanity must reimagine itself. Longinus turns to The Way, the nexus of the Seventh Age. His spear goes on a special mission to the island of Briton, where Wulfgar lives again.

Logres is centred on Avalon, but raises up Arthur, a man of mixed race, to carry its flag and to protect against the Saxons. But its main enemy is the Darkness, which ever seeks to extinguish the Light it hates and fears.

Finally, it seems as if the Darkness has won, and the dark ages descend. But does the Light not shine in the Darkness? Must Wulfgar remain in the Night?

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### **Vampire Shadows**

Dark vampires, hidden within the ancient empire of Khem, fall out with the king who, stirred up by the Necros, enslaves the Sheep People. But Iahveh, the shepherd-divinity, is stirred up, and stirs up a hidden hero to force a way out.

Apprehensively the two vampire-magicians join the Sheep of Iahveh, on their long and deadly trek in search of a promised land. Can any survive?

Warily they ask deep questions. Is Usen evil, as prejudice says? Is he possibly a good jailer? Are his unusual regulations, meaningful? They risk ending up in death.

Neverendingly the Sheep's sorry story drags out in interminable peregrination. Weary of wandering, most would settle for some green pastures and untroubled waters. But as they well know, that would take a miracle.